

Vol.6/1: 1994

ISSN 0794-8670

BULLETIN OF ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY

**POWER, AUTHORITY, AND LEADERSHIP:
African And Christian**

**PUBLISHED
BY**

**The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian
Theologians**

**BULLETIN OF ECUMENICAL
THEOLOGY**

ISSN 0794-8670

Vol.6/1: 1994

**POWER, AUTHORITY, AND LEADERSHIP:
African And Christian**

**Published by
The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian
Theologians**

Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology Vol. 6/1: 1994
ISSN 0794-8670

Editor

Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, c.s.sp. - Lecturer, SIST, Enugu.

Editorial Board

J.P.C. Nzomiwu	-	Lecturer, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
Chris I. Ejizu	-	Lecturer, University of Port Harcourt
Chris U. Manus	-	Lecturer, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife
Ibrahim Musa Ahmadu	-	Lecturer, University of Jos.
Obiora Ike	-	Director, Catholic Institute for Development Justice and Peace, Enugu.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Nigeria	-	N60.00 per issue
	-	N120.00 per annum
Foreign	-	20 U.S. dollars per annum
	-	10 U.S. dollars per issue
		(air mail postage included)
Payments overseas: %		Congregazione dello Spirito Santo
		Casa Generalizia
		Clivo di Cinna, 195,
		00136, Roma, Italia.

Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology is published by the Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians (EANT) and printed in Nigeria by SNAAP Press Ltd., Enugu.

All Correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, B.E.Th. Spiritan International School of Theology (S.I.S.T.), P.O. Box 9696, Enugu, Nigeria.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial.....1

Elochukwu Uzukwu A Servant Church in a New African
Nation: Leadership as a
Service of Listening 4

Cora Twohig-Moengangongo Paradigms of Power 33

Meinrad P. Hebga Universality in Theology and
Inculturation 52

Emefie I.-Metuh Two Decades of Religious Conflict in
Nigeria: A Recipe for Peace 69

Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria Communique..... 94

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

1. HEBGA, Meinrad P, is a Cameroonian Jesuit priest who taught in Institutions of Higher Learning in Yaounde, Rome and Abidjan. He is presently involved in charismatic healing and in procuring alternative health-care.
2. IKENGA-METUH, Emefie, is priest of the Archdiocese of Onitsha. He is Professor of Religion in the University of Jos, Nigeria.
3. TWOHIG-MOENGANGONGO, Cora, is a Canadian. She is Doctor of Theology and lectures in Foundational and Systematic Theology in the Spiritan Intl. School of Theology, Enugu, Nigeria.
4. UZUKWU, Elochukwu E. is a Spiritan priest. He lectures at the Spiritan International School of Theology, and is the Editor of the Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology.

This issue of the Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology is partly subsidized by Missio Institute of Missiology Aachen. The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians is grateful to Missio for this second extraordinary subsidy.

Editorial

The chicks have come to roost! The Abacha junta has bared its fangs! No one is any longer in doubt about how far Nigerian military dictators will go to realise their insatiable desire to control and use power in the most primitive of forms. The self-insulation of government behind draconian decrees replicates ancient African autocratic monarchies like Mali or Songhai. But those medieval kingdoms may have much to teach our 20th century African dictators on the humane treatment of citizens.

The recent statement of the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria must be repeated over and over again to our citizens under siege from military dictators: "We want to remind our beloved country men and women that we are free people. We may be vulnerable but not helpless under the present circumstances. We must not allow anyone to reduce us to slaves through repressive decrees".

The republican spirit which characterized the experience of authority in many traditional African societies is offensive to our gun-totting soldiers. The democratic or collegial exercise of kingly authority in many traditional African kingdoms is intolerable to African military and one-party dictatorship. Under the guise of "state security" the press is gagged; and the citizenry is dared to question any of the actions of our rulers anywhere on earth. But, as human beings, "we are free people".

In the previous issue of our **Bulletin** we examined the question of **Democratization** in Africa (BETH 5/2: 1993). We highlighted the difficulties facing African nation-states in showing creative leadership in the exercise of power. Events since independence from colonial rule have confirmed that the chief crisis of African nations is a crisis of leadership. In the exercise of power the feelings of the people are not fully consulted. Authority is not understood as leadership.

This number focuses precisely on this thorny question of leadership in the African state and church. It suggests that a new pattern of exercising authority as leadership is possible through creative cultural action. Patient listening to the

experiences of traditional African social and political institutions - retrieved and modernized - may lead to the emergence of democratic states in Africa. Similarly, a church-community in touch with elements of traditional African institutions may bear convincing witness to humane living while at the same being very close to the new testament experience of Church. Such a creative pattern of building community will provide an alternative to the abuse of power by rulers and the denial of human rights to the daughters and sons of Africa.

Two papers deal directly with the issue of authority in the State and church. Uzukwu explores the two prevalent patterns of social organisation in Africa: the one which entrusts authority in many hands and the other which concentrates authority in the hands of a king but under the close control of a council. He underlines that both systems lay very strong emphasis on consultation at various levels before decisions touching the society are taken. The organisational metaphor is "listening". He argues that the adoption of this listening model to build christian communities in Africa may help the churches to bear witness to an alternative way of building society in Africa. The second paper by Twohig-Moengangongo looks at the question of power from a feminist perspective. The model of power as dominance is rooted in patriarchy which entrenches and justifies inequalities in human relations by its subjugation of women. This model has been sacralized by Scripture, the Fathers, church teaching and theologians. But patriarchal dominance is not the only model of the exercise of authority, Twohig argues. Relational power is the alternative and liberating paradigm. It is inclusive and concrete, it is power-with instead of power-over. It entrenches mutuality and creativity.

Two other papers deal with the use of power in the religious domains. In his characteristic way Hebga questions the dominance of the Roman church over the churches of Africa under the ideology of universality. He examines closely the burning issue of the relationship between African customary marriage and christian marriage. This is an example of the mistaken identification of a Western cultural practice with faith in Christ. He advocates a healthy pluralism

in the reception of the faith. Metuh revisits the issue of religious conflicts in Nigeria in his search for a recipe for peace. According to him the root causes of the ferocious religious riots are traceable to fear of domination. The domination may be ethnico-political or politico-religious. To get beyond such fears Nigerians should not only be ready to understand one another and their religious beliefs but eschew provocative acts and utterances.

We conclude this issue with the **Communique** of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria which, to date, is the strongest challenge by any church organisation in Nigeria to the way the military control power. We add that the Bishops should **look** seriously at the structures of their church administration. The witness to **humane** living within Church itself may convincingly challenge the tyranny of our military dictators.

Elochukwu E. Uzukwu cssp.

A Servant Church in a New African Nation: Leadership as a Service of Listening.

Elochukwu E. Uzukwu

0. Introduction: The Tragic Reality of Africa¹.

Africa is living through the Dark Ages! One would have thought that slavery and colonisation would be the greatest of tragedies the sons and daughters of the continent would ever undergo. But the recent Rwandan massacres which may give lessons on sadism and genocidal mania to Nazi Germany shocked Africa and the world at this end of the 20th century. The massacres marked a giant step back into primitive sentiments of vengeance. Furthermore, the persistence of mis-governance by military dictators in Nigeria and other dictatorial regimes in Africa cast gloom on a continent dominated by pessimism. The silver lining was the successful multiracial elections in South Africa which saw the veteran nationalist Nelson Mandela as the first president.

The events of Rwanda had such unnerving effects all over the world that the month-long Roman synod for Africa was beclouded by its gloom. A Nigerian bishop made the memorable remark that ethnic blood is thicker than baptismal water. This barbarism may have moved the synod Fathers, in their message to the People of God, to adopt a clear position on issues of justice, peace and human rights. The bishops underlined the relationship between peace and democratic rule. They had severe things to say about tribalism, about responsible politics, and about the responsibility of the military in the spiral of violence cutting across Africa. Recently, the Catholic bishops of Nigeria emerged from their plenary meeting in Enugu to express, in very strong terms, their concern about the suffering of the masses of Nigerians and to denounce the rape of democracy in Nigeria. It is hoped that their statement will be followed by convincing action².

The purpose of this study is to show that Africa is capable of getting out of its dark night by fully depending on its own

resources. The traditional African experience of democratization has the power of transforming African societies, and of making the church in Africa witness to an alternative society. But the unfortunate experience of Africa since the time of slavery through colonialism to the post-colonial period has created a situation of weakness and of turning the continent to respond to the interests and objectives of the West at all levels - political, social, economic and religious.

Most African societies determined their aims and objectives in a democratic way before the modern period - i.e. before the 15th century. The first thesis I like to explore as being relevant for politics and ecclesiology in our context is that African traditional societies have always been democratic. Consequently, the fundamental elements of the democratic social organisations of Africa need only to be updated or modernized for the realisation of a dynamic process of democratization in Africa. Thus statements like "Africa is not ripe for democracy" cannot be sustained after a patient study of African history and traditions.

Democracy is a situation where people who make up a society are aware of their common interests and objectives, determine the way to realise such interests and objectives, and participate in the execution or realization of such aims and objectives of their society. A government is thus democratic when members of the society are chosen or acclaimed to lead the society in the realisation of its aims. Only a people which negotiates in all sovereignty the conditions for its constitution into a nation and defines its aims and objectives may hope to live in democratic conditions.

Secondly, the so called "democratization process" which became popular in many African countries in the 1990s do not necessarily represent a real experience of democracy. Some have rightly pointed out that the national conferences held in many French-speaking African countries created the opportunity for the people to express the common interests and objectives of their society. Apart from Benin Republic the rest of the exercise has not yielded much political results. The establishment of a multi-party state does not in itself mean that a society is democratic. Multi-partism is however desirable for the realisation of democracy.

Finally, since the spiritual world looms large in traditional social organisation, we have elements which will influence for the better the style of leadership in the christian church. This study defends the thesis that only a church which assumes its autonomy and is responsible for its witness to the resurrected Jesus may hope to make a contribution to humane living in Africa. Furthermore, rights and freedoms in the church are the highest testimony of the presence of the Kingdom or the transformation of the world.

I shall argue these points by first of all examining the two principal ways of social organisation in Africa before the modern period.

1. Two Principal Ways of Social Organisation in Africa.

Historians and anthropologists acknowledge that the patterns of organizing society which were in place before the historic contact with the Portuguese in the 15th century defy easy classification. In other words it is not easy to identify these organisations with existing Western patterns of society. But one takes the risk of bringing them together into two categories: societies with dispersal of authority or with authority in the hands of many, and those with centralized authority.

1.1. Authority in Many Hands.

The idea of the exercise of authority by many leaders in relatively small communities appears to be the most common pattern of social organisation in sub-saharan Africa. This is the way followed by bands of hunters and gatherers like the pygmies of Central Africa and the San of Kalahari desert. They constitute small autonomous groups. An elder or kindred head, assisted by or along with family heads, assumes ritual and political leadership.

This preference for the exercise of authority by many is also realised in fairly populous ethnic groups which are not receptive to a strong and centralized authority. The interesting example is the Igbo of Nigeria who would be counted in millions during the period under review. The most generalized pattern of social organisation among them is the

village-group. The village-group is a federation of clans. The clan is composed of kindreds, and the kindred is made up of extended families. The head of the eldest or principal clan presides over the assemblies of the village-group attended by other heads, etc. But decisions which affect the life of all the clans constituting the village-group necessarily involve consultation on family, kindred and clan levels. Orders which come from on top without prior discussion or negotiation are ignored. The saying **igbo enwe eze** (Igbo have no king) simply means that Igbo do not tolerate autocracy. Each village-group is an autonomous community. Some groups constitute themselves into mini-kingdoms - like the Onitsha and West Niger Igbo who have well developed Obis (kings or chiefs) similar to the Yoruba or Bini experience. But these mini-kingdoms maintain the basic patterns of the Igbo experience of authority. Aristocratic associations (**ozo**) develop as a mark of success with increasing political privilege and responsibility. Trade associations (like medicine men, black-smiths, etc.) and age grades are developed.

It is a situation where laws or decisions affecting the society at various levels and of various shades and forms are discussed in meetings of the youth (age grades), married women, daughters (married to other village-groups), titled people, elders, **ofo**-holders (family, clan or kindred heads), etc. As the society is anchored on the sacred, ritual is exercised on various levels by heads of families, kindreds, clans and village-groups; by priests of divinities (especially **Ala** - the Earth deity which, along with ancestors, presides over the land, its laws and morality). Finally, there is a priest-kingship in one village-group (**Nri**) which exercises ritual authority in most of Igboland. The king of this village-group sends out priests to purify all manner of crimes or abominations against the land. Since there is no centralized authority, matters of litigation which are not resolved to the satisfaction of litigants may be referred to oracles which are the last court of appeal. The **Ibini-ukpabe** oracle of the **Arochukwu** village-group was the most developed.

The societies which prefer authority in many hands are found among peoples like the Tiv of Nigeria and the Gikuyu of Kenya. In these societies there is a genuine experience of republicanism or direct democracy. Contact with neighbouring

groups is facilitated by exogamy and trade. Disputes and wars necessitate treaties and agreements about safe passage of citizens of one group through another's territory. The power of these groups lies in persuasion rather than coercion. There also lies their weakness. Their restricted numbers and limited range of coercive influence make them highly vulnerable. They have a highly developed pattern of consultation, but they lack the force to defend themselves against a centralized and militant group. For example, in the 13th century, the Bini kingdom (founded by the Edo ethnic group) had little difficulty in over-powering Igbo village-groups. But the experience of centralized authority in the typical African pattern consists of a stronger federation of more groups.

1.2. Centralized Authority.

The experience of centralized authority in African kingdoms has attracted more attention than the cases of dispersal of authority. These kingdoms are called states (according to the experience of the West) while the other types are classified as stateless societies. But I shall show that there are common elements which undergird the formation of both types of society.

The primary characteristic of African kingdoms is the existence of a kingship - which is either hereditary (like the Ganda) or elective (like the Oyo). Secondly, these monarchies are either autocratic or oligarchic. Under autocratic or absolute monarchy, the ruler directly appoints and sacks his representatives as he likes. This was the prevalent situation in those kingdoms like Mali and Songhai which were under the influence of Arab-moslem culture. The rulers (Mansa or Askia as they were called) appointed military commanders or slaves over provinces and districts; and these were directly responsible to the rulers. This kind of dictatorship is not typical of African kingdoms. Though such a tendency remains a temptation to centralized authority.

The monarchies which are oligarchic are the more typical African pattern of kingship. There is a monarch; but the exercise of authority is collegial. It is a type of "constitutional monarchy". The Bini, Oyo, Egba, Hausa,

Ashanti, Abomey, Zulu, Kongo, Swazi, and Ganda kingdoms are examples of such oligarchic monarchies. (Though the Hausa kingdoms were later influenced by Islamic culture after the Dan Fodio jihad, and became centralized and autocratic).

The Yoruba kingdom of Oyo is a typical example. The Alafin is the head of the empire. His person is sacred. He is in intimate relationship with God and the divinities. Peace, justice and prosperity are mediated to the kingdom through his person. To administer the immense Oyo territory, there are heads of districts, tribunals, army, and so on. But working very closely with him on a daily basis is his council of chiefs – the Oyo-mesi (seven very powerful chiefs who meet twice a day to deliberate on the affairs of state). Indeed it is the Oyo-mesi which elects the Alafin. Each member advises the king on a key issue of state. The Bashorun (who is first among the seven) cross-checks the king's actions and could call for his removal. Next in rank are the army chiefs (Eso – seventy captains who directed the wars that have been declared by the Alafin). The importance of the military increased during the slave trade. Then follow the clan chiefs and family heads. Since the Oyo empire was a confederation regrouping different units, heads of clans and families played an important role in the administration of the kingdom. There are also associations like the Ogboni (more characteristic of the Egba kingdom) and the age grades (which in modern times have been assimilated into the association of youths – *egbe*).

The Oyo empire is a system in which a "divine king" assures order, peace, and prosperity; his authority is respected – he is said to have right over life and death; but the authority he exercises is collegial with established principles of neutralizing the monarch. The advantage of one monarch, as compared to the many heads in the clan and village-group organisation, is cohesion, wider mixing of people, more efficient communication, faster realisation of the objectives of state, more peace and prosperity, and so on. But my interest of course is not to point out which system is better than the other. Rather it is to indicate the vision of African societies in their social organisation. I shall now draw out the characteristics which are common to these two principal patterns of the exercise of authority in Africa.

2. The Common Traits in the Exercise of Authority.

There are many common elements as well as differences in the exercise of authority by many and its exercise by a monarch. The difference between one king and many heads is clear. I shall highlight three common elements which are structural to the composition of these types of societies. I shall later show how important these elements could be in rekindling democracy in Africa and in our interpretation of the way of being church in Africa.

First of all, there is a strong emphasis on **consultation and deliberation at many levels** in order to take decisions affecting the well-being of the society. Since the kingdom is a federation of clans or village-groups, the levels of consultation or deliberation experienced in the village-group or clan are reproduced in a more sophisticated way in the kingdom. But no level is omitted. In this way the opinion of the people governed is always expressed. One may correctly say that power lies with the people. The society or community is an active subject of right. It participates in decisions affecting its well-being. The deliberations aim at reaching a consensus. This is the famous **African "palaver"** - a system of mass consultation of the people. This mass consultation is illustrated in the symbol or totem of the Manja chief in the Central African Republic. The chief's symbol is a rabbit, because it has large ears. He has the last word. But his ears are open to the opinion of all - humans as well as spirits. That is the source of his power; and that also is the limit of his power. Governance is delicate. The society is like an egg which is held in the hand. It must be protected from being broken.

Secondly, the **authority of rulers is respected**. This is a civic duty which is communicated through training from the family to other established levels of socialization. The ruler is installed for the benefit of the community - bringing order, peace and prosperity. The ruler protects the interests of the people. The respect of authority is linked to this indispensable service to the community. When he fails to render this service either through moral failure, sickness or old age he is removed from office or killed. The gestures of respect vary from people to people - prostration, profound

inclination, squatting while greeting, making way for the ruler to pass, and so on. Closely related to this respect of rulers is the respect of elders - parents, older brothers or sisters, older age grades, any older person, elders of the society, titled people. The summit of this respect of authority is the cult of ancestors. This brings us to the third common element.

Thirdly, authority is closely linked to the hierarchical conception of the universe. The ancestors are very close to God and the divinities. God's power and protection envelop human life. God is the sky in whose midst humans always find themselves without at any time arriving at its periphery. God is the sun we cannot gaze at directly; he breaks iron as one breaks wood; he is the protector of all. Thus the ancestors who are closest to him mediate these powers and benefits to humans. The rulers or leaders of society are never chosen or acclaimed without the intervention or ritual presence of the ancestral spirits. Consequently, these rulers are very close to the ancestors. They are their representatives or even their emanations. To respect authority is, indirectly, to respect ancestors and God himself. Blessings follow such a civic duty, just as harm awaits the one who flouts the authority of the rulers. This is the sense in which authority is considered sacred order or hierarchy. Interactions among humans are suffused with the presence of the sacred to ensure respect of lawfully constituted authority and freedom from abuse. The laws of society and the taboos surrounding people in authority prevent both anarchy and autocracy.

These go to show that Africa had the experience of democracy derived from its own resources, derived from its interaction with the environment. Athens may have taught the West the principles of democracy but Africa had it in her bosom as far as memory can go. We do not need to go to Greek schools to learn what we know best how to do. But if this is so, why is there so much tendency today in Africa towards tyranny and the denial of democratic and humane living? Why did the nationalists, after independence, dismantle the structures of the Western-type democracy to install their one-party state? Why are there so many military dictatorships? Why is the whole civil service and apparatus of state negatively used against the development of humane living in

most African countries?

It is here that one must underline the importance of going through memory lane to recall the experience of slavery and colonization and their impact on the African society and church. Unless such a radical memorial is experienced for healing, we shall never fully retrieve the fundamental values of African experience of democracy.

3. Dangerous Remembering: Slavery and Colonization.

The point of departure for establishing justice, peace, human rights and democratic or humane living in African society and church is a radical memorial of the African experience of slavery and colonization. Recalling can be negative or positive, creative or destructive. We prefer here the type of memorial which is creative. We remember not to reproduce the hates, the violence, and the corruption which characterized our past. Rather we remember in order not to repeat such abominations and in order to transform such latent forces of domination into potent forces of the empowerment of the weak. Such an empowerment has as its aim the transformation of the universe.

Slavery is a very ancient practice - as old as constituted kingdoms; as old as organized wars. But European slave-raiding and trading on the coasts of Africa have no comparison in the history of humankind.

Portugal was the leading slaving nation. Other European countries joined fervently especially when they realised the benefits of the trans-atlantic trade. The Portuguese regime, and generally all the other regimes in Europe, was absolute monarchy. The monarchy was supported by sacred authority - the sacred power of the church. For example, in his Bull, *Romanus Pontifex* (1454), Pope Nicholas V accorded to the king of Portugal a monopoly in trade and exploration along the West coast of Africa. The slaves brought back from the Guinea coast would be baptized and won for Christ. Great theologians like Bartelemy de las Casas directed the Portuguese and Spanish colonisers of South America to go to Africa in search of resistant human beasts of burden to work their plantations. De las Casas loved the Indians whom he ably defended but despised Africans. His repentance before

his death cannot diminish the weight his personality leant to the inhuman enterprise. Two popes were later to condemn slavery (Urban VIII in his bull of 22 April 1639 and Gregory XVI in the letter *In Supremo* of 1839). However the cooperation of the church in the crime against humanity and the theological justification which Medieval christianity gave to the enslavement of the black race have survived into the modern period. Half a millennium after the European invasion of the Americas (1992) John Paul II, during his visit to one of the principal African ports (Gorée - Senegal) where slaves were auctioned, called upon Africans to forgive the inhuman crime committed by those who called themselves christians.³ One may forgive; but it will be an unpardonable crime to forget the causes of that human tragedy. It is a tragedy which had a devastating effect on the organisation of African societies.

African societies along the coastal region were first of all disorganized and dislocated. For example the Kongo kingdom which was a confederation and whose king was killed in the battle of Mbwila or Ambuila (near the present Luanda, Angola, in 1665) broke into fragments. Secondly, Afro-Arab kingdoms concentrated on destabilising villages and weaker kingdoms to increase the human merchandise. Huge armies were raised for self defence and for slave-raiding. The Oyo kingdom had an army of about a hundred thousand men. New African slave kingdoms (like Opobo and Badagry in southern Nigeria) emerged or became strengthened to participate in the dehumanizing trade. Thirdly, wars, raids, and frequent disappearance of children, young men and women became common not only on the coast but also in the hinterland. Interethnic or inter-tribal wars and wars between village-groups became more frequent. The channels of trade in salt, gold, leather, spices, vegetables, from North Africa down to the heart of the equatorial forest became solely the channels of violence. Insecurity of civil society was the norm. Among the agricultural Igbo, parents going to the farm normally hid their children in the ceiling.

One may never know the number of the victims of this trade. Possibly between seven and fifteen million Africans may have been put on board slave ships for America. Half that number may have perished in dungeons. With the cream of the

African youth wrenched from the continent, the economic, political and cultural weakness of the continent became sealed. Finally, fear and distrust were implanted in the minds of Africans. Wealthy chiefs or kings may have sold their subjects, or were known to have sold their subjects, for European trinkets and gin. Thus the mentality became born that one sells another to become rich; that one may use mystical powers (like witchcraft or sorcery) to steal children or to spirit people away to slave camps for slave labour at one's benefit.

3.1. The Crime of Our Ancestors.

The participation of African kings, chiefs and leaders of clans or village-groups in the obscene trade is very hard to understand. It is about the worst tragedy that struck the continent. One may cope with being conquered, exploited, despised and hated by other races. But when the worm is inside the beans the seed is destroyed with relative ease (as the Luba of Zaire would say). The value of values - human life - was devalued by many of our leaders. Many sons and daughters of Africa were denied their humanity - consigned to dungeons and concentration camps for slave labour. Values which were built for thousands of years were consigned to the dust bin for European trinkets. Instead of the protection of the people, the leader became the enemy of the people. Instead of solidarity among members of a kingdom or a village-group, one sells one's kinsman for wealth. Instead of the law of hospitality, the stranger is unsure of his life. The practice became common to bury chiefs with some heads. Human life which the African vision of the world projected as the value to be protected, nurtured and enhanced became cheapened. Any surprise then that the confidence reposed on the king or chief as bringer of peace and prosperity was eroded in many coastal communities. Fear was implanted. Witchcraft became the imaginary devise to balance the negative consequences of a society disorganized in its very structures of meaning. This dimension of our history must not be forgotten; it is a necessary ingredient for setting our house in order.

3.2. Resistance to Slavery.

But we must also note the resistance to this movement by African societies and kingdoms. King Alfonso I of the Kongo had to protest to the king of Portugal in 1526 that children of the nobility were being hunted by the Portuguese for enslavement. When the Portuguese strengthened Luanda in the mid-17th century as a base for raids and wars into the interior, and gave the Kongo king Antonio impossible conditions, the king mobilised the whole society raising an army of about one hundred thousand men for the disastrous battle of Mbvila. This is one pattern of resistance against slavery by many African societies for the protection of cherished values and traditions.

The example of the Nri village-group among the Igbo of Nigeria presents the strongest principled action against slavery and against the cheapening of human life in those difficult times. Theirs was a radical, or even intransigent, defence of human life. According to the Nri myth, there was a covenant between the Earth spirit and humans. "No person should defile the earth by spilling human blood in violence on it." The priest-king of Nri who presides over the priestly village-group sends priests all over Igboland to persuade people to live in peace and purify the earth polluted by violence. Throughout the turbulent period of slavery and colonization, it is on record that only once in Nri history did an Nri king take up arms to fight a war. The aim of the war was to resist the Abam mercenaries who were hunting for slaves for the Aro group. An Nri historian called the action of the king "a mushroom attempt"; for, after all, "it is an abomination to kill any human being even in war"⁴.

Nri civilization does not tolerate any holy wars, crusades or jihads. This is a society where religion is at the service of humane living. Today more than ever such humane living eludes Nigeria, Africa, and the world. Our societies need to be reconstructed on the sound ethical principle that any attack on human life sets out shock waves of disorder on the earth. It is an offence against the earth, against the owner of the earth, and against the inhabitants of the earth.

3.2. The Colonial Experience.

The colonial ideology is that of domination and exploitation of the colonized. The machine for the realisation of the colonial ideology was both technical (colonial military superiority) and religious (christianity). Even if some missionaries opposed the methods of the colonisers, evangelisation and colonization were linked; this link was even foreseen in the Berlin conference of 1884-85 where Africa was partitioned.

The consequences of the colonial experience were enormous. First of all, the societies which had been weakened through slavery were either totally destroyed or subjugated. Every member of the society was reduced to the level of the masses including the chiefs and rulers. The local hierarchy was replaced by an administrator representing a foreign autocratic regime. The sacred institution which supported the colonial domination was the christian church which never condemned colonialism as it had condemned slavery. Secondly, the subjugated kings or chiefs and the nobodies installed as chiefs (for example among the Igbo) lost favour with the local population and even became despicable in their eyes. They had to mobilize the population for forced labour; and often times labour was not drawn from their own kindreds. Many who were displaced from their homes to labour camps (for example in the Ivory Coast and Cameroon) never returned. Witchcraft and sorcery became more entrenched as an imaginary devise to interpret the action of these rulers who could spirit people away into labour camps.⁵ Thirdly, a new class of Africans started to emerge. These were indigenes who were participating in the new administration or those who were preparing themselves to take over from the colonial administration. Fourthly, all orders were received from the outside at all levels. African societies became restructured to respond only to external stimuli. This situation of extroversion was operative both in the secular and sacred domains. The African population lost control of the politics and economy of their continent to the predators. They were no longer the originators of their own designs, nor were they the projectors of their own schemes nor the creators of the events that lead to their destiny.⁶ Work, in so

far as it is public, in so far as it is related to government, became vitiated. It was done for the interest of predators. It was not public service for the well-being of society. One could cheat. Civil service and the whole apparatus of state took off with this inherent lie. In the church, Latin rituals or rituals of the other churches were, indiscriminately introduced with their patterns of initiation - all closely linked to the school system. While the native rituals of initiation were not only discouraged but were declared diabolic. The highest virtue for being selected as a minister in the church (priest or bishop) is the readiness to obey and the openness to being schooled to comply with orders coming from outside. Finally, Africans became primitive, savages, infants, lazy, at all levels. This is how Africa was invented; the famous anthropological impoverishment of Africa.

The violence which accompanied colonization and evangelisation has to be rejected in the reconstruction of the continent. The collusion of the churches with the colonial aims and objectives shows what can still happen if the churches do not keep their distance from any type of regime in order to confront whatever evil that faces the society. The reaction of the mass of Africans and the elite on the cultural, political, and military levels to fight colonisation and the discrimination against Africans have to be assessed and assumed by Africans in both their negative and positive dimensions. But for the reconstruction of Africa, and for the reconciliation of Africa with the powers which enslaved and colonised her the supreme value of life must always be kept in perspective. This involves the rejection of violent means to achieve our aims and objectives. A renewal in our way of being church will make a contribution in this direction. An Nri political theologian (Nwaokoye Odenigbo) enunciated the ethics of this new order in his criticism of colonialism and slavery:

When the white men came, they asked us to abrogate the codes of abomination and taboos. They said that they had brought peace based on different ideas. We agreed and decided to watch them. Today, we see war everywhere; we see brothers have sex with their sisters, we see people strangulate others to acquire their wealth. The white men brought many good things; they brought peace between Igbo communities but they have not brought peace within the communities. We Nri brought peace within communities when we ruled. We are

doing all we can to bring peace between communities but the slave trade did not allow us to, and the white men came and stopped us from ruling. White men have arms and we do not believe in fighting. Fighting spills blood on the earth and this is an abomination. The white men that came started by killing those who did not agree with their rules. We Nri never did so: we tried to persuade and convince people not to do so. Okoli Ijeoma of Ndikelionwu and the Edo did what the white men did - they killed people. We Nri condemn it.⁷

Condemnation of such an action is only a first act. The building of viable communities which will supervise the reign of ethics in international relations is the necessary basis for peace. Many church groups and episcopal conferences in Africa and the world have joined their voice in condemning the violence in the politics and economy of the world today. But a more viable pattern of life must first be shown to be possible to lead the society out of the present confusion. It is in this way that a new way of being church in Africa and in the christian world may start the transformation of Africa and the whole planet earth from the inside.

4. Service in the African Church – an Alternative Pattern of Building Society in Africa.

The church exists to proclaim and bear witness to the Kingdom. As the new Israel of God, it realises already in its assembly what it proclaims by word and deed as an alternative way of living relationship. The style of ministry in the church is, in my view, the most eloquent testimony of an alternative society in face of the dictatorships, the spirit of competition and domination, which characterize governance and business in Africa and the world.

The 1994 synod of bishops for Africa gave a clear signal that the church in Africa wishes to chart a new course for relational leadership. No doubt the synod Fathers were aware that the present style of being church in Africa, as elsewhere in the Western world, is not only dominated by the clergy but is clericalized. Consequently, it is interesting how the interventions in the general assembly of the synod, according to available statistics, show that issues related to the Laity and Small Christian Communities (SCCs) loomed large as new structural elements for the emergent African ecclesiology. For

example, while the themes on priests and religious came up 9 times each during the interventions, the laity and SCCs came up 30 and 27 times respectively. Of course this does not mean that the laity are emerging as more important than the clergy or religious in a new understanding of evangelization in the year 2000. Instead of a major shift in direction, I rather see a major shift in concern. But this major shift in the concern of the Church will ultimately influence the new direction of restructuring the Church to make its witness more convincing in the modern world.

What emerges from the analysis of the organisation of African societies made earlier in this study is that the community or society looms large as subject of right. Its emergence is tied to ancestral history or memory. Consequently, the world of spirits is very much part of the human world and is a vital dimension for the humanization of the world. A similar situation is noted in the emergence of the church which is the sphere of the operation of the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of God.

4.1. Spirit Ecclesiology as Relational Ecclesiology.

The dominant aspect of the dimension of spirit, as revealed in the sacred recital of the creation of each individual person in African societies, will now be related to the creative manifestation of the Spirit of Christ in the emergence of the church-community.

In West African societies the composition of the human person is expressed in a multiplicity of relationship. The spiritual element of the person is one of the fundamental dimensions expressed in the metaphor of relationship. This element is connected with God and is the creative genius which embodies the destiny of the human person. The Igbo call this spiritual dimension *chi*. Among the Asante it is called *okra*; while the Yoruba and ancient Egyptians call it *ori* and *ka* respectively. It is a way of stating clearly in mythic language that each person is a unique creation, a unique concern of divinity, an intimate of God the creator.

Among the Igbo this spiritual element is the basis of creativity of the individual person in community. Success or failure, good luck or bad luck, which are assessed always in

relational dimensions in the community, are expressed in this symbolic metaphor of the spiritual dimension of the self.

In the christian dispensation, the presence of the Spirit of Jesus or the Spirit of God in the church-community generates intimacy with God and creates the favourable conditions for creativity: the creative liberty of the children of God. Those born (baptized) into the church-family are made children of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit - a Spirit which prays within each one of them (Rom 5:5; 8:9. 14-16). It is this indwelling Spirit which bestows gifts to each member of the new family of God for the up-building of this same family (1Cor 12; Rom 12: 4-8). This personal and individual link with the Spirit in the church-community is the basis of the freedom or liberation of each christian. It is the freedom to create a better community; a renewed African community, a better world.

In the church-family where caring, solidarity, acceptance, dialogue and trust⁸ are characteristics of the warm relationship in the Spirit, the newly born christian is fundamentally liberated to live an integrated, related, wholesome or holy life. This image of the church-family which is the fundament of the call to a renewed African ecclesiology demonstrates that inculturation is very far from watering down the christian experience. The Synod of Bishops for Africa was quick to dismiss such fears. Cardinal Thiandoum summed up the feelings of the Synod Fathers in his report after the interventions,

It can be said that inculturation emerged as an overriding concern at this Synod. It concerns every aspect of the life of the Christian in Africa; it is the marriage of professed faith and concrete life. Inculturation has nothing to do with seeking a cheap and easy Christianity, rather its final aim is sanctity in an African manner.⁹

Inculturated ecclesiology draws both the church-community and individual christians into greater intimacy with the Lord-Spirit. African ecclesiology moves each believer to a dynamic relationship with the Lord and with the community of faith.

The presence of the Spirit which fills the community and which dwells in each baptized christian becomes manifest through the diverse gifts bestowed by the Spirit for the up-

building of the community. Each baptized christian is endowed with the gift of the Spirit as the Spirit wills. Each gift is a way of giving internal coherence to each christian. It is a way of liberating each christian from being closed within the self, so that he or she may be fully involved in the service of the community. As the church does not exist for itself but for the Kingdom, the gifts of the Spirit to each christian is for the purpose of propagating the same Kingdom (cf 1Cor 12: 4-11). New Testament authors fall back on the rich Old Testament metaphors to describe the presence of the Spirit of God in the midst of the baptized as transforming the body of christians into "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1Pt 2: 9), "a kingdom and priests serving our God" (Rev. 5: 10; 1: 6). It is a sanctity which is best understood when expressed in the warm language of relational ecclesiology. Each christian enjoys intimacy with God; and at the same time lives a life of warmth, solidarity and intimacy within the church-family; and, consequently, ministers in solidarity to the community and the world in order to transform the world. The "in" of the Spirit of God which makes his home in the community and in each individual christian, is also the "opening out" of the spirit of the community and of individuals to creativity. A church not only of the "head" but essentially of the "heart".

The love and care within the church-family which is the source from which the communities and individuals draw the energy to witness to the Kingdom makes the church the principal place for the recognition and defence of the rights of individuals. The recognition by the community, of the gifts of individuals and of the needs of the same individuals, bears the principal testimony that the community is the field of the operation of the Spirit of God. More than secular institutions the christian church has more reason to defend the rights and dignity of each human person and each community. Any action that reduces a community or an individual to a sub-human level has more reason to be resisted within the church than by secular institutions. Any discrimination based on race, age, sex, or social standing, has more reason to be rejected within the Church-community than in secular institutions. This is because all humans are created in God's image, and all christians are children of God; and the indwelling of the

Spirit of God is enjoyed by each and all. Just as the community is the subject of right, each christian (brief each human) is a subject of right. Unfortunately, from the time the christian church and the secular dictatorships went into an unholy alliance, rights of individuals and communities became infringed upon as a matter of course. In the christian church, a renewed African ecclesiology of church-family, should learn from African communal living that each community and each person enjoy integral, wholesome or holy life through the recognition of the indwelling Spirit in both the individual and the community.

The recognition of the gifts of communities and individuals, of the rights of communities and individuals is fundamental to the understanding of ministry in the Church. It shows that fundamentally all members of God's family are graced (filled with God's particular gifts). All communities have their particular gifts which they bring to the communion of churches. No member of the church-family has an origin different from other members; though each has his or her own particular gifts. There is no question of any member being superior to any other member. In other words, no one, apart from the Son of God, the head and Master of the Church, is more a child of the common Father of all in the one Church which is the Mother of all. All are begotten through the same ritual process of baptism in "water and Spirit". Ministries and services are then for the well-being of the community, and for the testimony of the community to the Kingdom in the world. As Mgr G. Philips put it, "Some were established as teachers by Christ, stewards (dispensers) of the means of salvation, and pastors, not over the others but for the benefit of the others, not *super alios* but *pro aliis*"¹⁰

4.2. From Clericalism to a Collegial or Collaborative Ministry.

The issue is not whether "hierarchy" is fashionable or not. It not a matter of whether we should democratize in the church or not. The incarnational tension of the church implies that the church as institution cannot ignore the structures of society in which it is living. However, the fundamental issue for the renewal of the church is whether the Spirit of God is allowed full initiative in the assembly of christians. It is a

question of whether the church remains still the creation of the Spirit of the risen Lord to accomplish the mission confided to her by the Lord.

4.2.1. Ministry with "Large Ears" or Leadership of Communities in the Service of "Listening".

Among the Manja of the Central African Republic the totem for the chief is the rabbit because this unobtrusive animal has "large ears". As is common all over Africa, the chief is considered to be very close to God, the ancestors and the protective spirits of the community. He does not replace the ancestors. But, along with other elders, he makes them present (represents them) in his person and behaviour. The Manja underline "listening" as the most dominant characteristic of the chief. His "large ears" bring him close to God, ancestors and divinities, and close to the conversations taking place in the community. He has the "last word". This is because he speaks after having assimilated and digested the Word of the community. He is the guardian of the dynamic, life-giving Word which creates and recreates the community. One may legitimately compare the custodianship of the Word (in other words, Truthfulness, Fairness, Honesty, Communication) imaged in the "large ears" of the chief with the tendency among the Bambara of Mali to admire the "immensity of the Word"; a Word which "embraces" the whole of humanity. When uttered it heals and provides humane living. Such a sacred Word is "too large" for the individual mouth. It is an almost personalized Word which no speaker ever masters or appropriates, rather it belongs to the human community; and each sacred speech (of the community leader) approximates to this Word.¹¹

For the chief to be fair, he must be a patient listener. And this listening takes plenty of time. This is what is generally referred to as "African palaver": the liberation of speech at all levels of community in order to come close to that Word which is too large for the mouth; the Word which saves and heals. "African palaver" should not be understood as the interminable, time consuming, endless, aimless, useless discussion!

The liberation of the word is the best antidote against

autocracy. The experience of dictatorships and the control of the mass media by government, where speech no longer is a means of communication but a tool for propaganda and lying, is far from the experience of communication, fairness, and truthfulness, which is the aim of speech and discussion in traditional African communities. In the name of African culture, those who like to hold the Word captive make the claim that as chiefs they have the last word. Mobutu propagated the slogan "one father, one mother, one country, one chief". His aim was to seduce Zairians into believing that he is the best thing that ever happened to Zaire. Many African dictators, as is the practice in Nigeria, normally go out against the free media in their attempt to hold the Word captive. They are charlatans and terrorists. Instead of being leaders, they are hirelings and robbers who are there to steal and destroy. Communication, Fairness, Truthfulness, elude them because they have failed the first test of leadership in Africa: listening to the conversations going on in the community. Furthermore, they have failed to live under the gaze of ancestors and God, in order to qualify to draw from the pool of that creative and healing Word "too large" for the mouth of one individual, in order to build community. They have very "short ears" instead of the leaders' "large ears". They are hard of hearing. Indeed they are deafened by the noise of their propaganda.

It must be repeated over and over again, in the political community as well as in the Church, the chief, as the Manja tell us, begins by listening; he speaks only after having recorded the discussions going on in the community, so that his speech releases the healing word of which he is the principal custodian; a word which makes the community stand erect.

African bishops and priests love the image of the priest as chief. The elements in the constitution of the now approved Roman Liturgy for use in the dioceses of Zaire make this clear. The crucial question researched into when that liturgy was being put together was how a traditional chief would preside over the Eucharist if he has a grasp of its essential meaning. This image of the chief is entrenched in the popularity of the leopard symbol in both the liturgical vestments and the development of related liturgies (like the

liturgy for the consecration of Virgins). The leopard is the chief of animals. Liturgies being developed in Kumasi (Ghana), Diebougou (Bourkina Faso) also draw immensely from the functioning of the chief within the community. This in itself is a positive orientation. Inculturation is drawing from the high culture of the community. But it also shows a very positive appreciation of the understanding of ministry in the Church. Instead of service to a particular local spirit (priest with limited ritual functions) it is understood as leadership of a community which includes ritual functions.

We must, however, fall back on the resources of our African tradition to recover the dynamic image of the chief or community leader - a person living under the gaze of God, ancestors and spirits; a person living in attentive listening to the community in order to be the custodian of that Word which belongs to the community, which belongs to humanity. Such an image of the chief is certainly unnerving for an individual. It is parallel to the sanctity expected of the priesthood according to the teaching of Cyprian of Carthage, a sanctity drawn from the Levitical Law of purity.

We must take care to underline that the image of the chief or community leader which will influence ministry truly christian and truly African in our church is not the bastardization of the chief by African dictators, nor the imported Roman and feudal autocracy which dominates the present ministerial practice of the Roman catholic church. The typical hierarchy in Africa is a servant "sacred power" or a self-less leadership which is the polar opposite of autocratic or despotic rulership.

4.2.2. Liberating Sacred Power, "Hierarchy", through Initiation.

The order (ordo - Tertullian) in the Church and its hierarchical structure are sometimes argued, in catholic ecclesiology to be of divine origin. It is, however, strange that the key term *hieros* is totally missing in the New Testament description of ministry (*diakonia*). Certainly ministry in the Church is connected intimately with the very emergence of the Church. From the constitution of the Twelve, the necessary symbol of the renewed offer of God to

Israel through Jesus, it is clear that their ministry is fundamental in the emergence of the "new Israel of God" which is the Church. Secondly, the apostolic ministry (as distinct from the function of the Twelve) is so crucial that each branch of the Church must in one way or the other trace its origin to the apostles.

Other ministries and services arose within the church according to the needs of the Gospel and following the movement of the Holy Spirit. For example, there are the seven chosen to oversee the relationship between Jewish and gentile christians (Acts 6), and those placed in charge of the churches as presbyter-bishops (Acts 14:23; Tit 1:5), and the numerous services in the church whose list is not supposed to be exhaustive (1Cor 12).

Therefore the church cannot be conceived nor can it live without ministries. The church as an organisation has need of leaders. In the apostolic and post-apostolic church the ministry of the presbyter-bishop and deacon were the best known and universalized. The operation of the Spirit of God within the community for the choice or election, and the posting of the minister, especially within the context of the liturgical celebration, lends an aura of sacrality to the responsibility of the minister. In this way one may legitimately interpret the function of leadership in the church as an exercise of sacred power, "hierarchy". It may be more correct to speak of sacred ministry. But if this is construed to mean the establishment of *ordo* in the form of the Roman *ordo senatorius*, entrenching rank and privilege in the church-community, such an understanding of ministry will be totally against the prescription of the Master:

"You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mk 10: 42-44).

The service of Jesus unto death influenced definitively the christian notion of ministry as **service** (*diakonia*). John's Gospel described it as the last testament or will of the

departing founder of christianity in the arresting story of the washing of the feet:

"Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord - and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them." (Jn 13: 12-16).

This testament of the Lord to his church on the eve of his passion is as powerful as, and the reverse side of, the eucharistic rite. Both the service and the rite, the one never without the other, make present the service of Jesus in the christian community and the witness of the church to the good news of salvation in the world.¹²

Official catholic theology of the priesthood and the prevailing liturgical practice of the Roman rite like to link the establishment of the priesthood to the ancestral gestures of the Lord Jesus on the eve of his passion (on Holy Thursday). This connects the institution of the eucharist, understood as sacrifice, with the priestly ministry. Bishops (and presbyters) have been associated with the presidency at the eucharistic celebration, considered as a sacrifice at least from the 2nd and 3rd centuries. [The Didache may be the last evidence of the presidency of prophets]. But theology is correct in attaching the emergence of ministry in the church, and the founding of the church itself, to that ancestral and foundational narrative of the eucharistic gestures. It is a narrative of the self-gift of Jesus as food for his friends. It is a narrative recapturing the more lengthy recital of the passion or the ordeal he passed through to become the redeemer of the world. This ordeal or paschal mystery is a passage, an initiation. If "servants are not greater than their master" nor "messengers greater than the one who sent them" (Jn 13:16), then ministry is not simply presiding over the eucharist, but essentially displaying the service of the master unto death in the midst of the brethren and the world. This view tallies with the rabbinic understanding of the messenger, the one who is sent (*shaliach*, or *apostolos*) - the authorized or commissioned representative of the sender of

the apostle.¹³ Ministers or leaders of community are in this way the commissioned representatives of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 12:28), and the commissioned representatives of the Spirit-filled community (2 Cor 8:23; Acts 13:2f). They are elders who are witnesses of his sufferings (1Pt 5:1) through their own sufferings.

We become christians through a process of passage or initiation which imitates his death in order that we may rise up to a new kind of life (cf Rom 6:1-3). We become, thereby, partners or participants in Christ (Heb 3:14) - or a kingly priesthood (1Pt 2:9-10; Rev 1:6; 5:10). That is why we "look to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:2). Consequently, the christian group, as a body and as individuals, bears united witness to the service unto death of the Master. This is their fundamental ministry in the community and to the world. Aware of his path of humiliation and self-abasement (cf Phil 2:6-8), it will be impossible to move from the language of service to that of domination, from the language of being slaves of all to the language and practice of rank and privilege. Service as the overriding experience of living in the family of God has set aside all manners of domination based on patriarchy and special knowledge or gifts:

"But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father - the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant". (Mtt 23:8-12).

To avoid the betrayal of this Gospel which has the sole intention of changing the ways of the secular world, of creating the alternative society which is the beginning of the transformation of the world, we must reread the injunction of the Master in terms of the resources of Africa in its social organisation

But the most arresting imagery of this ministry as service in the Church is the image of the "large ears". The characterization of the leadership of the bishop in his diocese or of the episcopal conference as a "ministry with large ears" is a good symbol for leaders working for the unity of the

community and for the effective communion or communication between local churches. Because it implies consultation or deliberation at all levels of community, it becomes an imagery which testifies, according to Cyprian, that the will of God may triumph in the church-community over against human presumption or error.

The ecclesiology of Cyprian of Carthage and the clear ecclesiological and disciplinary options of the North African church evoke the image of the "ministry with large ears". Cyprian's ecclesiology revolved around the Oneness of the Church and the Oneness of the priesthood. The moral unity which the pastors must always maintain is the symbol of the unity of the church realised in a local group enjoying its autonomy but linked to the other local churches in communion. North African councils were held to resolve problems of the church of North Africa. The North African church showed itself competent to resolve its own problems without being the less in communion with the Roman church. The Oneness of the priesthood is symbolized in the primacy of the episcopacy of Peter. The Lord made him priest before the others, not to show any superiority, but to demonstrate the One priesthood. When some disciples decided to discontinue with Jesus (Jn 6:66-69) Peter replied for the Church. This shows that the church is the people united around its Pontiff, the flock united around its shepherd. He who is not with the bishop is not with the Church.¹⁴

However, despite this high sacerdotal inclination of Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage declared himself opposed to dictatorship in the exercise of episcopal power. In the thick of the persecutions, his colleagues, the priests and deacons, wrote him to ask his views about the *lapsi* (who fell away but wished to come back). They had to find out from him because one should do nothing without the bishop (*nihil sine episcopo*). The bishop of Carthage replied in Letter 14:4 in the following words,

Concerning the matter about which our brothers in the priesthood wrote me ... I am unable to give an answer all alone. I made it a rule right from the beginning of my episcopacy, according to my personal opinion, to take no decision without your counsel and without the vote (suffrage) of the people.

Thus, just as it is important in the Church to do nothing without the bishop, it is equally vital to do nothing without the presbyteral council, and to do nothing without the lay faithful. Indeed, for Cyprian, the vote or consultation of the People is fundamental in the election of the Bishop. Despite the fact that probably the ultimate vote is that of the neighbouring bishops, Cyprian lays heavy capital on the vote of the People. This vote of the People and the clergy is the most effective way for the revelation of Divine Providence and the avoidance of human error (*praesumptio humana*).¹⁵

Cyprian's position shows us that the Church as a People assembled around the Pontiff, a Flock gathered around the Shepherd, is a Unity based on communion and responsibility. Consultation and deliberation are important at all levels for the realisation of the Church. The pattern of administration is collegial, or to use the language of the 1994 Africa synod, it is "collaborative" ministry.

The community as a subject of right, as the sphere of the operation of the Spirit of Christ, is built on collegiality through the collaborative participation of the members. It is necessary to underline that the Yoruba (of Oyo kingdom) call the Alafin or king a "divine king". Nevertheless, twice a day, there is deliberation over his manner of ruling or rather leading the community by seven powerful chiefs who are members of his ruling council. And there are other levels of control as we showed in the earlier parts of this study. This shows that the community has faith in its God who is best encountered in the conversations going on in the community for the benefit of the entire community. It has trust in the spirituality of its leaders but this trust is best expressed through the free participation of all in deciding the orientation of their community. This participation is more direct or republican in those communities where the exercise of authority is in many hands.

The christian community is all the time listening to the voice of he who has conquered death, he who is the chief Shepherd who gave his life for the flock. The elders of the community are "witness[es] of the sufferings of Christ" (1Pt 5:1). And as true witnesses (martyrs) they "feed" or "tend" the flock, not lording it over them (cf Jn 21:15-16; 1Pt 5:1-4). A leadership which cultivates the "ministry with large

ears" makes it easier for the churches to listen, to hear, and to do what the Spirit is saying to the Churches (cf Rev 2:29; 3:22). This is the way forward for the church in Africa and the world church. On this basis the church may challenge the dictatorships and propaganda which undercut communion or communication at the expense of humane living.

ENDNOTES

1. This paper is a digest of my forth-coming book, **A Listening Church. Autonomy and Communion in African Churches**. See also P. Daigne, **Pouvoir politique traditionnel en Afrique occidentale**. Paris: Présence Africaine, 1967, pp. 27-28. And especially, D.T. Niane, editor, **General History of Africa. IV. Africa from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century**, UNESCO, 1984; and B.A. Ogot, editor, **General History of Africa. V. Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century**, UNESCO, 1992.

2. See Plenary Meeting of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria held at Enugu on September 12-16, 1994. **Communique**.

3. See John Paul II, "De ce sanctuaire africain de la douleur noire, nous implorons pardon". Rencontre avec la communauté catholique à Gorée. **Documentation Catholique** 2047: 5 avril 1992, pp. 324-325.

4. See Onwuejeogwu, **An Igbo Civilization. Nri Kingdom and Hegemony**, London: Ethnographica, 1981, p. 28; for the testimony of Nri neighbours about slavery see E. Isichei, **Igbo Worlds. An Anthology of Oral Histories and Historical Descriptions**, London: Macmillan, 1977, pp. 30-34.

5. See for example the interpretation of this phenomenon by A. Mbembe, **Afriques indociles. Christianisme, pouvoir et Etat en société postcoloniale**, Paris: Karthala, 1988; and also his "Mourir en post-colonie. Préalables socio-historiques à une théologie africaine de la mort", in J. Doré, R. Luneau, F. Kabasele (eds), **Pâques africaines d'aujourd'hui**, Paris: Desclée, 1989, pp. 123-130.

6. See J. Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America. A Dream or a Nightmare*, London: Fount, 1993, p. 10, quoting from Delany's *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (1852).
7. See Onwuejeogwu's second interview with Nwaokoye Odenigbo in *Isichei, Igbo Worlds*, pp. 27-28. Okoli Ijeoma who was a native of Ikellionwu near Awka used Abam mercenaries (Ada people) to wage war in order to capture slaves - *Isichei*, *ibid*, pp. 104-107.
8. Final Proposals of the Synod for Africa, *Propositio n° 8*.
9. *Relatio Post Disceptationem*, 22 April 1994, in *L'Osservatore Romano Weekly Edition*, n° 21 - 25 May 1994, p. 9.
10. *L'Eglise et son Mystère au IIe concile du Vatican*, Tournai: Desclée, tome 1, 1967, p. 7, cited by G. Thils, "Le Nouveau Code de Droit canonique et l'Ecclesiologie de Vatican II" *Revue Théologique de Louvain* 14: 1983, p. 299.
11. L.V. Thomas and R. Luneau, *Les Religions d'Afrique noire*, Paris: Stock and Plus, 1981, I, p. 28.
12. See for example, X. Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread. The Witness of the New Testament*. New York: Paulist Press, 1987.
13. K.H. Rengstorf, "apostolos", in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by G. Kittel, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964, vol. I: 393-447.
14. Cyprian, *Letter 66*: 8,3.
15. Cyprian, *Letter 67*: 4-5; see also P. van Beneden, *Aux Origines d'une Terminologie sacramentelle. Ordo, Ordinare, Ordinatio dans la Littérature chrétienne avant 313*, Leuven: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1974, p. 147f.

Paradigms of Power

Cora Twohig-Moengangongo

0. Introduction

Power is energy. Power is the capability to do, to act or to accomplish something. Power is the ability to make or establish a claim on life. Two distinct notions of power are expressed in the way power has been defined and deployed under a system of patriarchy and in the way conscientized women and men are critiquing and reconstructing patriarchal notions of power. The kinds of relationship within which these differing kinds of power are experienced and actualized are themselves distinct and they effect the degree of human flourishing or diminishment. In this paper I intend to explore these two notions of power as ideal types and the kind of relationship they evoke or in which they emerge. It is my judgment that these two characterizations approximate, on the one hand, patriarchal power, and on the other hand, feminist expressions of power, in human history and relationship. I will contrast and evaluate each expression of power as constituting or retarding the project of human liberation and therefore as more or less revelatory of the mystery of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

1. Paradigms of Dominance

Much of human history has been a record and an interpretation of one notion of power and one notion of the nature and the activity operating in human relationships. In contemporary scholarship one name for both the data recorded and the method of recording, is patriarchal history. From this standpoint, only one view of the totality of patterns of experience, of judgments of facts and resulting actions at any one time and place is chronicled as history.¹ Patriarchy, an

ideology and a social system, has ordered life from a model of dominance and subjugation.²

Dominance denotes supremacy or preeminence over another, the will to control the other, the will to keep the other in a weak and acquiescent position in relation to oneself. Dominance intends exclusivity. One is powerful; the other is powerless! Within a paradigm of dominance, the manner of experiencing and exercising power has been a primary condition for converting the ineradicable inequalities of human existence into life-denying injustices. Patriarchy, and patriarchal power, erode human integrity and human community. Patriarchy is incompatible with responsible and sustainable growth of peoples and nations on this finite planet.³ Patriarchy is a distortion of the "image of God" from which a vision of the "humanum" springs.

1.1. Classical Patriarchy

Patriarchy refers to a legal, social and economic system of society that validates and enforces the domination of males over dependent persons. One such system is classical pre-industrial patriarchy, as mandated in Hebrew and Roman law and carried forth in medieval and early modern Europe. Within this system, wives, children and slaves are the dependent persons. Friedreich Engels, in his classic *Study The Origin and History of the Family*, defined the subjugation of women as the first oppressor-oppressed relation, the foundation of all other class and property relations.⁴ Slaves can be emancipated, children grow up, and both, if they are male, can become owners of property. Women remain subjugated since they are defined generically as dependent persons.

The general characteristics of a classical preindustrial patriarchal system are the following. Women are legally dependent on the male head, so they lack autonomous civil or legal status in their own name. They cannot vote, represent themselves in law, make contracts, or in other ways be recognized as autonomous adults with legal standing. They have the permanent legal standing of children or dependents, and are defined as quasi-property of their fathers and, later, their husbands or other male relatives who are the head of the

household where they reside. A woman's rights to her own person are restricted. Choice of marriage partner, standards of virginity and chastity to which she must conform, legal access to her children and regulations of her sexual activity are all beyond her control. She has no recourse against abandonment, divorce, or physical abuse. She can be physically punished, sometimes even killed, and sometimes sold or bought by males. At marriage she loses membership in her own family and becomes a member of her husband's family. Her identity is seen as legally merged into that of her husband who represents her and exercises headship over her.⁵

Patriarchal societies denied women access to higher education. The public offices of war, politics, religion and the professions are seen as belonging exclusively to men. This exclusion from education and office denies women access to forming the public culture for receiving any visibility as creators of culture. There were and are, of course, exceptions to this system in the cases of individual women; and women find means of secondary power and influence within the system through their roles and relationships. However, the above sketch traces the main outlines of what has obtained for women within classic patriarchy:⁶

Social systems and structures shaped by patriarchy form the predominant background of western civilization and those civilizations influenced by western colonial and imperialist expansionism. Although the major elements of patriarchal law codes have been largely disassembled in contemporary liberalized western societies, the domination of women is sustained by inculcating patriarchal consciousness, in women and in men, by upholding social mores that prescribe women's secondary role and by maintaining the economic marginalization of women. Religious praxis functions as a prime legitimizer and socializer of patriarchal norms. Authentic faith and converted consciousness challenges the injustice of such interpretation and praxis.⁷

1.2. Sacralization of Patriarchy

Women's experience of domination and subjugation by patriarchy has been given religious validation in Judaism and

Christianity to name just two traditions. This sacralization of patriarchy operated not just within the religious institution, but within the whole society.⁸ The patriarchal law codes which make women inferior are seen as sacred and divinely derived. Patriarchy, as a reflection of natural law, identifies male headship as the order of nature and so, the order of God. To seek equality for women is to violate the order of creation, subvert the order of society and disobey God as creator. This identification of patriarchy with the order of creation is presumed by Paul (1 Cor. 11:3), and also by the author of 1 Timothy (2:11-15). It has generally been endorsed by the classical theological tradition, as in Augustine and Aquinas.⁹ Feminist theology offers an alternative vision in reinterpretations that have become key in contemporary orthodox theological discourse.¹⁰

If God is the author of patriarchy, where patriarchy is both a revealed law code and also the order of creation, then, not surprisingly, the image of God is modelled after patriarchal leadership. God is the Great Patriarch. By imaging God solely through one gender, the characteristics of sovereign maleness come to be seen as essential to the nature of God.

The patriarchal pattern of divine-human relationship shape all the symbolic systems of prayers and theological reflection. The patriarchal marriage pattern of dominant husband (head) and submissive wife (body) becomes a fundamental image for the relation of God-nature, God-Israel, Christ-church and Christ-soul.¹¹ These patterns of social relationship are so deeply embedded in our religious culture that they become accepted as divinely validated, when in fact the religious images themselves are ideological sacralization of a particular social and cultural order.

The fundamental premise of this religious sacralization is that a patriarchal God created patriarchy, rather than an authentic understanding that patriarchy has created the patriarchal God. In the name of God, patriarchy has sanctified an unjust system of social domination and subjugation which permeates symbolic representation and ritual practice.

1.3. Unilateral Power

The notion of power that characterizes relationships between women and men under patriarchy is unilateral power¹². Unilateral power is a capacity to influence, guide, adjust, manipulate, control or transform the human or natural environment to advance one's own purposes. In the exercise of unilateral power, there is an operative dualism where the poles are split and one half is always preferred or judged better than the other half.¹³ The roots of this dualism can be found in the apocalyptic Judaic and classical neo-Platonic religious heritage of classical Christianity.¹⁴ These earlier religions carried a set of dualities that still profoundly condition an alienating view that sets intellect over and against body, civilization over nature and spirituality over materiality and sexuality.

The alienation of the masculine from the feminine is the primary sexual symbolism that sums up all these alienation, where women are aligned with body, nature, materiality and sexuality, that is, the negative pole of each dualism. What develops out of this operative dualism is an adversarial, competitive system, where the winner is always better than the loser. Righteousness accrues to the winner, and the loser is intrinsically defective. A hierarchy is established, and the endless cycle of competing for power is engaged as one struggles to maintain or increase one's strength to influence another. Competition becomes the direct offspring of the hierarchical mind-set.¹⁵

A categorical feature of human experience is inequality. People do differ in intelligence, imagination, health, capacity to love, among other differences. When these differences and inequalities become measured on a hierarchical scale of value and when one's self-worth or stature is correlative to this scale, one consequently perceives the world to be populated by competitors and adversaries. Because a gain in power by the other is experienced as loss of one's own power, status or self-worth, unilateral power or linear power is associated with initiative, aggressiveness and force on the part of the one possessing power, and, inactivity, docility or apparent indifference is perceived on the part of the powerless.

Such power is essentially one-directional in its operation

where the one possessing power aims to create the largest effect on the other, while being minimally influenced by the other. One hesitates or refuses to commit oneself to those people or realities one cannot control or influence since being influenced and being dependent reflect inadequacy, passivity and lack of power or status.

Unilateral power-based relationship focus on the dominant individual or group and the goals of that individual or group. In competition for power, the freedom of the other is severely restricted and controlled, where the "other" can be a person, a group (religious, social, racial, ethnic, gender) or even nature. In patriarchy, unilateral adversarial forms of power are predominantly male exercised and projected. The power of women has been appropriated to serve and maintain these systems. One feminist author notes: "Women primarily tend the machinery and clean up the debris. Sometimes they are the machinery and the debris".¹⁶

1.4. The Non-Communal Self

A unilateral conception of power is based on a non-communal or a non-relational experience of self. What is proposed here in terms of the self can be transposed to the group as non-communal and non-relational before other groups.¹⁷ The self possesses relationships with others, but the self is not primordially created out of or influenced by these relationships. The self relates primarily to others as objects, as means to one's own ends. Self-sufficiency and self-dependence are aims in the operation of unilateral power since dependency and connectedness in relation to the other, as self or as group, is viewed as weakness. In western cultures, the rugged individualist is a prototype of this non-relational, non-communal ideal type. In cultures typified by communal and extended solidarity, the non-communal and non-relational is exemplified by exclusion of those beyond the kindred. Competing and hostile tribalisms are the offspring of non-communal and non-relational notions of power in this extended realm.

The non-relational self or group is dependent only on itself and "God" in order to exist. This "God" is primarily a transcendent, impersonal, non-related spirit. Some of the

basic images of God which emerged in patristic Christianity focused on abstract speculations about the being of God within Godself, separated from God-in-relation with what God created.¹⁸ The stress on God as "being itself" and as "wholly other" in the Christian tradition stresses an utterly transcendent, non-related God as the only source of divine strength which diminishes the awesome mystery of the God Incarnate in Jesus Christ and in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

1.4.1. Unilateral Power as Abstract

Unilateral power is abstract in its operation. It is motivated by a highly selective interest in others. Only those aspects of the human and natural environment which are relevant for one's own purpose are considered. The full concrete being of the other, as person, as community or as God, cannot be of significant concern.

Communication in unilateral terms is devoid of emotion and veils the concrete reality that the energy of the ignored or repressed dimension of the other cannot be disregarded indefinitely and with impunity. The flow of communication is largely one-way. The practice of unilateral power leads to conditions of estrangement. It alienates not only the object of power but also the possessor of power as it anaesthetizes sensitivity to the reality that all human beings and all life forms are interrelated and interdependent.¹⁹ The sense of mystery and the mystery of the other, including the Divine Other, are diminished in life lived in terms of unilateral power. One cannot be open to the presence of the other, to be shaped or influenced by the other, when one is motivated by the will to dominate and control other humans and the natural world according to one's own purposes. Mystery and presence and love are holistic in their dynamic horizon and they cannot be encompassed within a tunnel vision of narrowing rationalism.

1.4.2. Unilateral Power and Love

The experience and language of love in the Christian tradition is often contrasted with power, power considered in

unilateral terms.²⁰ When Jesus is described as powerless, he is at the bottom of a hierarchy of dominating, coercive power. Jesus however knew himself as powerful (Matt. 28:18 and Mark 5:24-34). Jesus was powerful in a way that confounded those who regarded him as a threat and an adversary. The life and message of Jesus reveals a God of boundless love, whose power is healing and salvific.

Contrary notions of love are expressions that are unilateral and non-relational, one-directional and non-mutual. When unilaterally conceived, love may involve a kind of concern for the other but it may be that which seeks to control the other in the direction of a predetermined goal, or it may seek to mold the other, consciously or otherwise, into one's own image. There are too the grand gestures of self-centred people, the patronizing and pitying offers of love, the love of the strong for the weak, all founded on inequities and imbalances of power.

Conversely, there is the false notion of love in the cowering gratitude of the weak toward the strong who grant favours or in the misguided love that is often mistakenly called self-sacrifice. This latter form compensates for or often mistakenly called self-sacrifice. This latter form compensates for or responds to charitable love in the non-mutual, unilateral context. By manipulating the intention of love as self-sacrifice, especially in the model of an inauthentic Christian spirituality, the sacralized patriarchal norm has deepened women's subjugation to the power holders and has preserved the patriarchal system of relationship in a paradigm of dominance. An alternative notion of power will be constituted in an authentic and therefore a freeing notion of love.

2. Paradigm of Relation

Whereas unilateral power is the capacity to produce an effect (dominance) or undergo an effect (subjugation), relational power is the ability to produce and undergo an effect, to influence and be influenced. Relational power is inclusive and concrete. Relational power is not power-over, but power-with. It is a dramatically different paradigm for imaging, suggesting and even modelling dynamic and creative

human relationship and power.

Unilateral power expresses an operative dualism that finds expression in an adversarial mind-set. Domination/subjugation line up with winner/loser, us/them.²¹ Such exclusive, dualistic thinking represents a closed system that is not open to purview the vast panorama of possibility in human relationship and experience. The resulting fearful, defensive and false consciousness will need to be transformed in a liberated imagination. If we cannot imagine it, we can never achieve it! New images will call forward a new order of thinking in inclusive terms, ones which express the interconnectedness in ways that are more genuine and human.

2.1. Woman and Freedom

The new order from which is emerging an alternative view of relationship and power is founded on a view of women as full human persons, longing for wholeness, desiring to be free, upright and whole. Freedom, in which human existence is constituted in integrity, in both its substantive and existential sense, is actualized in relationship. There are at least three dimensions of freedom to be considered.²² Human existence, the human person, is related to her/himself by virtue of our capacities of self-transcendence and reflective consciousness. By virtue of our being an autonomous self among others, freedom is related to others and to the world. By virtue of the finite and created character of the world and the self in it, freedom stands in relation to the Transcendent, to the Infinite, to the Creator, to God. A human person is constituted in this triple relationship.

Throughout patriarchal history, institutional structures and religious formulations have severely restricted or denied women's personal, social and even transcendent freedom. Personhood was ascribed largely on the basis of gender. Woman is intrinsically inferior to man. In consequence, women were ascribed roles that were subordinate, carefully circumscribed and supplementary. Much of Christian theology sacralized this view by identifying women with evil, by refusing to ascribe to women the fullness of the "image of God", and by defining women as derivative from and wholly

complementary to men.

As women move towards freedom and identity we claim our value and personhood. The poet Rainer Marie Rilke spoke of a time which has begun to be when woman

...will have stripped off the conventions of mere femininity in the mutations of her outward status.

and when

...there will be girls and women whose name will no longer signify merely an opposite of the masculine, but something in itself, something that makes one think, not of any complement and limit, but only of life and existence, the feminine human being.²³

2.2. Relational Power as Mutual Activity

Relational power is experienced in love through mutual activity, beyond the dualism of activity/passivity, domination/subjugation. Women have been associated with a passive, reactive nature. Beverly Harrison challenges this view as an invention of western nineteenth century bourgeoisie spirituality. This "cult of true womanhood" promoted an ideal of women's social powerlessness among European and American leisure classes but it finds many contradictions in history. The creativity, risk-taking and primarily the child-bearing and nursing activity of women has been basic to human survival.²⁴

A self-description of her womanhood by Sojourner Truth, a nineteenth century icon of courage and perseverance from slavery in African and American history, disputes the image of effete, fragile woman in this vivid self-portrait:

Nobody ever helped me into carriages or over mud puddles, or gave me the best place. And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me. And ain't I a woman? I can work as much as any man when I can get it and bear the lash as well. And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most of them sold off to grief, none but Jesus heard me. And ain't I a woman?

Through a process of conscientization this devaluing of

women's person and women's activity is brought to light as oppression, sexism, misogyny and injustice maintained through the operation of unilateral power. Women's anger released in this new awareness is energy that can and must be creatively channelled for critique and reconstruction. A danger for women, as for other oppressed people, is that the anger will turn inwards and lead us to see ourselves and other women as victims rather than as people of strength, who have struggled for the full gift of life against the structures of oppression. As victims and subordinates, women have denied anger while becoming highly attuned to the responses of the dominators, acting as the quintessential mediators, adaptors and soothers.²⁵ The operations of unilateral power are maintained when conflict and anger are suppressed. Anger, when claimed, provides the energy to reflect, judge and act, and this energy needs to be reclaimed and reinterpreted in order to build new and authentic systems within which relational power is further generated.

Anger does not univocally dictate the opposite of love. One description of anger within a paradigm of relation is put forward by a moral theologian:²⁶

Anger is...a feeling signal that all is not well in our relation to other persons or groups or to the world around us. Anger is a mode of connectedness to others...Extreme and intense anger signals a deep reaction to the action upon us or toward others to whom we are related.

Fear before anger, evokes a response or coercion or denial of the perceived threat posed by the wielder of unilateral power. Relational power can understand and receive anger when it is a signal that transformation in relation is called for. Anger does not automatically lead to wise or humane action but anger is a source of energy which, when it participates in intentional converted consciousness, issues in moral activity for relationship. Such energy source is within each person and its power is generated and released when we begin to interact.²⁷ In stark contrast to unilateral power, where others are manipulated for power, relational power calls for what Sally Gearhart names "resourcement", being in touch with the source of energy and operating intentionally to realize that power, a new power that is not "power over" but

"power with." ²⁸

Relational power and dualism, choosing between activity/passivity, nature/spirit, dominance/subjugation/, are incompatible. Relational power means both/and. It is active-receptivity and receptive-activity that feminist theologians Margaret Farley and Catherine Mowry LaCugna understand is modelled after and images the relations within God as One and Triune. Trinity, a name for relationship within Godself, is infinite reciprocity, infinite mutuality and infinite equality. Trinity is our model of Christian agape, within self, for neighbour, to and with God. ²⁹

Relational power is receiving that is openness to the other; it is giving that is self-fulfilling. It is the experience of connectedness with others, that becomes the power to create one another, a power less dramatically visible but more awe-full than technological power. It is, finally, love. Bernard Lonergan writes:

There is in the world, as it were, a charged field of love and meaning; here and there it reaches a notable intensity; but it is ever unobtrusive, hidden, inviting each of us to join. And join we must if we are to perceive it, for our perceiving is through our own loving. ³⁰

2.3. Relational Power as Contextual

Relational beings live in a concrete context and this context is woven into the very fabric of our being. Non-relationally, the person has experiences and has power in a world that the person seeks as much as possible to control. Relationally, the person is her/his experience and our self-understanding is created out of our history and our relationships. Relational power is concerned with the lived life of the other, as individual, as group, as world, as that which mediates transcendence. ³¹ Feminist Christian Ethics specifies that a moral theology must not only be rooted in an incarnational spirituality but it must aim at overcoming the body/mind split in our intellectual and social life in every realm. Moral action proceeding from moral rationality must be embodied rationality. In a purely abstract and speculative rationality/rationalism, it is indeed possible to find transparent clarity, cleanness and absence of ambiguity. If,

however, all our knowledge, including our moral knowledge, is "body-mediated knowledge", if perception is foundational to conception, then sense experience mediates our connectedness to the world, the world of dynamic pulse and flow in which we live. If values are first apprehended in feelings, and feelings are felt in bodies and interpreted in conscious psyches and questioning spirits, then human integrity and empowerment must enfold our whole being, body, psyche, spirit.³² Otherwise, our power to image a new world, a new heaven and a new earth, and to act into its creation, is damaged or destroyed.

It appears that Christian theologians have been talking about souls for very long. We may begin to wonder anew at what the mystery of the Incarnation, God becoming human, fully human in Jesus Christ, invites us to in our day. Our human longing to be awake, to be attentive and passionate to our personal, social and global situation is what an embodied, intentional consciousness engenders. Our failure of response, our inertia and passivity, our compulsive frantic and faithless activism, our fatalistic and "leave-it-to-God" false piety in the face of militarism, sexism, racism and all broken relation will be empowered through our "attunement" to the "charged field of love and meaning" that releases power-in-relation.

2.4. Power and Intimacy

Power is the capacity to sustain a mutual relationship, constituted in intimacy and immediacy. Unilateral power promotes relationships where compromise or accommodation are engaged in order to maintain or enhance one's place on the hierarchy of ego, self-esteem and power. Any expression of mutuality is more of bargaining, legalism and contractualism, issuing from fear and a lack of trust. Relational power issues from a wellspring of intimacy.

It is not a "personal feeling" an act of romantic endearment, a sentiment of exclusive attachment between two people. Intimacy refers to fundamental bonding between persons' innermost senses of identity. It is the centering of relation in the depth of the human being. To be intimate is to know and be known by others, in such a way that we are assured, confident, that the mutuality of our relation is real, creative, co-operative.³³

Immediacy in relation emphasizes the concrete, the direct relation, without an intervening agent. Immediacy stresses the present choice, the present act in the practical living of everyday life that expresses solidarity and reciprocity. It is attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible and loving activity that is creative of individuals, of community and of our world.³⁴

2.5. Relational Power and Justice

Making right relationship and sustaining right relationship is doing justice. Within the emergence of relational power the claims of legal justice, as unilateral and contractual, are included and transcended. Relational power is an affirmation of the Biblical notion of justice as "saddaq", being in right relationship within oneself, with one another, with God and with all of God's creation. Doing justice is a medium of loving. Justice becomes the criterion and judge of love.

Elemental estrangement is disclosed in the brokenness of life's primordial relationships. Estrangement encompasses the uncommitted, the indifferent, the unmoved, the complacent, the prideful, the absolutely certain, the hateful. Women's experience of estrangement that violates mutual relation must claim our participation with the submissive, the fearful, the manipulator, the small-minded, the apathetic and the self-negating.³⁵ Estrangement contributes to the entropic wave of unilateral power and to decline in individual, mutual, communal, universal creativity. The overcoming of estrangement through reconciliation begins in the experience of depth and intimacy in relation that unfolds in the praxis of justice.

2.6. Relational Power and Suffering

To sustain internal, intimate relationship, to tap the reservoir of relational power, is to suffer the pain of broken relation, including our own pain. A person of passion, passion as the willingness to feel, to rejoice and to suffer, is one who endures both the power, the ecstasy, of what loving is and who endures too the trauma and the pain of broken relation. There is no avoidance of this pain. There is only the

choice between pain steeped in passion or the pain incurred through invulnerability to true relation. This does not mean a search for suffering as an end in itself but the willingness to risk, to dare to act deeply and forcefully to sustain relationship, to love deeply and radically.

The life and message of Jesus illumines our understanding of the power in relational experience. Jesus' life and death manifest the power of love in radical activity that expressed mutuality, solidarity, and reciprocity with the excluded ones in his community. Jesus' way of being in the world expressed firstly a profound experience of intimacy with God as Abba whose power, present in Jesus, was released to deepen relation, to embody and extend community, and to pass on the gift of life through a radical love that was faithful to death.

Like Jesus, we are called to a way of being in the world which deepens relation. We are called to confront that which blocks the power of human personal and communal surviving and flourishing. We are called to resist all that denies human well being, human community and human solidarity to so many in our world. The vocation of those who follow Jesus is to break through the lies, silences and apathy which mask the prevailing distortions and manipulations in relationship. Power, as relational, as manifesting God, as touching and healing one another, as freedom from fear -this is the power in Jesus, the power in us of the spirit of Jesus, when, like him, we bear the image and reveal God in our world.

3. Conclusion

Power wielded to effect domination and subjugation is life-denying. Relational power is mutually empowering; it is intimate and immediate; it is creation and liberation; it is justice and love. Relational power is constitutive of human beings who long to grow into the likeness of God in whose image we are all, women and men, created. Relational power, in the memory and in the spirit of Jesus, will transform the idolatry of dominance and heal the chasm of estrangement to reveal again a glimpse of the depth, the breadth, the height of the mystery of God in human relationship.

ENDNOTES

1. See Simone Weil, **The Need for Roots**, trans. Arthur Wills, New York: Harper and Row, 1971, p. 225 where she describes writing "... from the underside of history".
2. See for example Anne Brotherton, "Paths of Partnership", **Fellowship** April/May 1985: 5-7, 28. Critique and reconstruction of notions of power, leadership and authority is key to the work of many feminists, among them Christian feminists. See also Bibiana Muoneke, "Women, Discipleship and Evangelization" **Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology** 4/1-2: 1991, 59-70; Mercy Amba Odoyoye, "Violence Against Women: A Challenge to Christian Theology", **Journal of Inculturation Theology**, 1/1, 1994, 38-58; Lynne Tirrell, "Definition and Power: Toward Authority without Privilege" **HYPATIA, A Journal of Feminist Philosophy**, 8/4: 1993, 1-34.
3. For an interpretation of the questions raised in this paper in the context of theology, a new cosmology and an ecological age, see Thomas Berry, **The Dream of the Earth**. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988.
4. Friedrich Engels, "The Early Development of the Family" from **The Origins of History of the Family, Property and the State**, Zurich, 1884, New England Free Press pamphlet, 66. See also "The State of the World's Women", United Nations Report to the Special Session Ending the Decade For Women, Nairobi, Kenya, July 1985. The report states that in general, women still perform two-thirds of the world's work, receive one-tenth of its income and own less than one-hundredth of its property.
5. For a discussion on the status of women within patrilineage in most African societies see Christopher I. Ejizu, "Human Rights in African Indigenous Religion" **Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology**, 4: 1991, 40-43.
6. See Rosemary Radford Ruether, "A Feminist Perspective", in **Doing Theology in a Divided World**, eds., Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres, New York: Orbis Books, 1985, pp. 65-75.
7. On converted consciousness see Cora Twohig-Moengangongo, **Feminist Consciousness and Bernard Lonergan's Notion of Dialectic**, doctoral dissertation, Regis College, University of Toronto, 1992.

8. R. R. Ruether elaborated on women's status in classic patriarchy in an unpublished paper "The Religious Sacralization of Patriarchy" included in a folder entitled **"How To Skills With A Feminist Perspective"** prepared by the National Assembly of Religious Women, 1307 Wabash, Chicago, Illinois, 1984. See also Ruether in **"Mysogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church"** in **Religion and Sexism**, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974, pp. 150-179.

9. Augustine typically assimilates the "natural" subjugation of women to men into the relation of body to its head. See Ruether, **Religion and Sexism**, pp. 156-168. See also the experts from Aquinas in Elizabeth Clark and Herbert Richardson, eds., **Women and Religion** New York: Harper and Row, 1977, pp. 78-102.

10. See for example Catherine Mowry LaCugna, ed., **Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective**. San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1993; Idem, **God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life**, San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991; Elizabeth A. Johnson, **She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse**, New York: Crossroads, 1993.

11. For reinterpreting these patriarchal patterns of divine-human relationship see Tibor Horvath, "Marriage: Contract? Community? Sacrament of Sacraments? Fallible Symbol of Infallible Love: Revelation of Sin and Love," **Proceedings of the Theology Institute**, Vol. II (Villanova University, ed. F.A. Eigo, 1970).

12. I am indebted to Bernard Loomer and his paper "Two Conceptions of Power" **Criterion**, Winter, 1976, hereafter cited as **Loomer**. Loomer adopts what he calls a hermeneutic of academic objectivity in stating that the problem of sexual differentiation is irrelevant to the principle of power conceived in relational imagery. The author of this paper develops her analysis from a hermeneutic of intentional feminist consciousness that has its base in women's experience of subjugation in history.

13. I am relying here on Bernard Lonergan's notion of dialectic in **Insight: A Study of Human Understanding**, Volume 3, **Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan**, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992, that is interpreted and developed in Robert M. Doran, **Theology and the Dialectics of History**, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990.

14. See Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Motherearth and the Megamachine: A Theology of Liberation in a Feminine, Somatic and Ecological Perspective" in **Womanspirit Rising**, eds. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, New York: Harper and Row, 1979, pp. 43-53.

15. See Barbara Starrett, "The Metaphors of Power". in *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*, ed., Charlene Spretnak, New York: Anchor Book, 1982, pp. 185-193.

16. Ibid., 188.

17. Bernard Lonergan's elaboration on inauthentic intentionality in terms of individual and group bias is instructive for this point in the discussion. See *Insight*, pp. 244-253.

18. LaCugna traces the trajectory in second and third century Christian tradition away from the relation and saving action of God in Jesus Christ and the Spirit (oikonomia) toward a focus on the essence, substance, "ousia" of God (theologia) somehow apart from humanity and creation. See *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, cited above.

19. On the reality of interdependence of all life forms see "Living Responsibly: Technological, Economic and Ethical Challenges To Our Environment", a paper by Moni McIntyre, presented as part of a seminar on Feminist Theology at the Dominican House of Philosophy and Theology, Ibadan, Nigeria, May, 1994.

20.20. Loomer, "Power", p. 18.

21. See Margaret Farley, "New Patterns of Relationship? Beginnings of a Moral Revolution" in *Women: New Dimensions*, ed. Walter Burkhardt, New York: Paulist Press, 1977, pp. 51-71.

22. This analysis of freedom is from Roger Haight, *An Alternative Vision: An Interpretation of Liberation Theology*. New York: Paulist Press, 1985, pp. 6-7.

23. Rainer Marie Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, trans. M.D.H. Norton, New York, 1962, p. 59.

24. Beverly Harrison, "The power of Anger in the Work of Love", *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, 36:1981, 45.

25. See Jean Baker Miller, *Toward a New Psychology of Women*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1976.

26. Harrison, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love," p. 49.

27. Ibid.; Hannah Arendt says that power is... "generated when people come together". We begin to act when we interact.
28. Sally Gearhart, "Womanpower: Energy Re-Sourcement" in *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*, pp. 194-206.
29. See references to Margaret Farley and Catherine Mowry LaCugna cited above.
30. B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*. London: Darton, Longmans and Todd, 1971, p. 290.
31. Gregory Baum states that the first principle for reinterpreting our idea of God is that God cannot be conceived as simply over-against human existence, because God is related to and enters into the reality of what human beings are. See Han (sic) *Becoming: God in Secular Language*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1970, pp. 170-180.
32. The integral operation of human being, as individual, as community and as culture, toward world-constituting praxis, toward building the kingdom of God is Robert M. Doran's comprehensive work, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* cited above. A development of Doran's work is Cora Twohig-Moengangongo, *Feminist Consciousness and Bernard Lonergan's Notion of Dialectic*, cited above.
33. See Carter Heyward, *The Redemption of God: A Theology of Mutual Relation*. Washington: University Press of America, 1982, p. 44.
34. Catholic ethical tradition is clear on the positive correspondence between the personal good of the individual and the common good. Pius XII in a Christmas address in 1942 stated: "The origin and primary scope of social life is the conservation, development, and perfection of the human person. A social teaching or reconstruction programme...when it disregards the respect due the human person and to the life which is proper to that person, and gives no thought to it in its organization, in legislation and executive activity, then instead of serving society, it harms it..." See *The Major Addresses of Pope Pius XII*, ed, Vincent Yzermans, St. Paul, Minn: The North Central Publishing Co., p. 54.
35. Writing in 1960, Valeria Saiving challenged the traditional naming of the first sin as pride. Saiving, in an insightful essay, names the sin of women more as the underdevelopment or negation of ourselves as women. See "The Human Situation: A Feminine Viewpoint", in *Womanspirit Rising*, pp. 25-42.

Universality in Theology and Inculturation

Meinrad P. Hebga

0. Introduction

As a former member of the special committee that was set up during the last General Congregation (of the Jesuits) to prepare on inculturation, I am very happy to take part in the present international meeting¹. Since 1974, indeed, I kept looking forward to seeing this wonderful occasion. I know we come from all over the world, to listen to one another, and so help build a real universal Christianity, in which all nations and cultures would feel at home. But to achieve that remote, and yet fascinating goal, every one will need patience, tolerance and charity. Scholars are expected to put aside mutual fear, distrust or prejudice, and to listen to other people, even very different, non-conformist, or as they say, outspoken. God's glory and humankind's salvation being at stake, we are not supposed to deliver brilliant diplomatic speeches meant to please one another, or stern pronouncements intended to discourage any step forward, any challenge to a "de facto" cultural monopoly.

When the Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar dared to speak out at the fourth Synod of bishops in Rome, in October 1974, the official protectors of Roman catholic orthodoxy and western culture were thrown into panic. The African bishops were only calling for an original African theology. They maintained that the so-called theology of adaptation is completely out of date, and should be replaced by a theology of incarnation, what we call today, inculturation. But hardly had they issued their rather moderate statement, than hell broke loose. A deafening concert of Cassandras warned against jeopardizing the unity and universality of Christianity for the sake of cultural particularism and nationalism. I wonder if we should not rather speak of antagonistic chauvinism. Nobody is immune from emotional attitudes, and we should all carefully examine

our real motivations, and see whether we not are led by cultural pride and imperialism, or at least by fear. I mean the fear of the unknown which builds walls of defence. Let us say chauvinism and touchiness are real among all of us, but goodwill and honesty too. So let us courageously and charitably listen to one another.

1. Universality and Inculturation

1.1. Universality in the Making Implies Pluralism.

The christian message is catholic or universal in the sense that it can become meaningful in any human situation or cultural context. It is meant for all peoples and nations. According to Hans Conzelmann, Luke's Acts is structured along a scheme that takes Jesus' message from Galilee to Jerusalem and eventually to Rome itself, a Lucan symbol for the world. Now if Christianity, by definition, refuses to acknowledge boundaries, it cannot bow to a cultural or philosophical monopoly, even under the pretext of protecting unity. It is of necessity pluralistic in its expression, since no human language, philosophy or culture can pretend to match the infinite richness of the word of God, and to express it in such a way that other cultural approaches become useless or irrelevant. Limited pluralism in theology, in canon law, in liturgy, is essential for Christianity to be true to itself, in order to reach all nations in their manifold diversities.

Universality is in the making; it is not a ready made thing that one could point out, or display for everybody to see. It is but a seminal reality slowly brought into perfection by the Holy Spirit. Could a standardization of Christianity's philosophical and theological expression hasten the maturation of the seeds of unity and catholicity? I doubt it! The reasons are clear from a few plain facts.

Christianity in the East and West follows the cleavages of sub-cultural realities. It could be roughly said that Latin nations are Roman Catholic, Anglo-Saxons are Protestant, and Greek and Slavic peoples are Orthodox. This plain sociological fact should be remembered whenever our foreign sister-Churches lecture us on unity and universality. If we

look at the official teachings of most Christian Churches, diversity or pluralism leaps to the eye. The "Summae Theologicae", the "Kirchliche Dogmatiks" and other monumental works of Western denominational theologies are but logical systems of thought, kinds of Christian axiomatics, each one referring itself to Jesus Christ and the New Testament, each one setting up a religious faith whose credibility is based largely upon its internal coherence. Before the breakthrough of Ecumenism, they were Leibnitzian monads of some sort, with very little, if any pre-established harmony to make them communicate. Thus the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran, the Episcopalian, the Orthodox Churches, and other denominations enjoy their respective theological systems which, they believe, provide them with the best understanding of Christian revelation.

1.2. Inculturation of theology in Africa

1.2.1. Negative hints from the highest authorities?

To many a theologian in Africa, it seems that the very phrase "African theology" stirs uneasiness and suspicion among our sister-Churches overseas. In August 1969, when addressing the Symposium of African bishops in Kampala (Uganda) Paul VI acknowledged that the Church in Africa should not be European, Latin or Oriental but African. It must be first of all Catholic, that is "entirely founded upon the identical, essential, constitutional patrimony of the self-same teaching of Christ, as professed by the authentic and authoritative tradition of the one true Church...". Granted this first reply, however, we come to the second.

The expression, that is the language and mode of manifesting this one faith may be manifold. Hence it may be original, suited to the tongue, the style, the character, the genius and the culture of one who professes this one faith. From this point of view, a certain pluralism is not only legitimate, but desirable... In this sense, you may, and you must have an African Christianity.²

But the Pontiff didn't mention theology.

The secretary who drafted the Official Report of the Fourth Synod of bishops in October 1974 summed up the discussion on pluralism in theology in just a few lines: "We must offer to Africans the pure elements of Christianity, common to all men, and then dress them in African culture. There is indeed no African Christianity, just as there is no European Christianity". Great! But where could one find those pure elements not yet dressed in any human culture or philosophy? Later on, the Holy Father himself cautioned against jeopardizing "in one way or another the necessary *communio* with other particular Churches and with the Successor of Peter".³ "It would be dangerous, the Pontiff added, to speak of theologies diversified according to continents and cultures. The content of faith is catholic or is nothing".⁴ In late 1975, Archbishop Benelli declared in Abidjan, while dedicating the 'Institut Catholique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest': "It is absurd to speak of African theology". He repeated the well known doctrine about universal theology, and so on, and so forth.

All in all, we do not believe our hierarchical leaders meant to prevent African Churches alone from inculturating theology. There is no way to suspect them of such a racial discrimination, since phrases like "German theology", "Eastern or Western theology", or even "French spirituality" are never branded as schismatic or heretical. They just cautioned us against the reefs which some of our predecessors in the profession had run into.

1.2.1. Points of view

One of the most distinguished members of the Association of Third World Theologians, Fr Raymond Panikkar, reflects on the supposedly universal religion required of non-Western Churches to become Catholic. How can the Church be universal and at the same time lock herself up in one culture and philosophy, exporting and forcing upon all nations Western culture alongside divine revelation? "The problem of fundamental theology", Panikkar feels, "cannot be solved by extrapolating a set of propositions which may be meaningful within a certain cultural or religious context, but which are irrelevant outside it."⁵ According to him, a really

fundamental universal theology should be an Exodus theology that, rather than clarifying forever its own tradition, leaves house and kin and wanders outside into a "terra incognita"; in other words, metatheology instead of diacritical theology.

As one might have expected, preventive condemnations of our would-be "Third World Theologies", instead of acting as deterrents, quickened our awareness, and confirmed our dedication to create our own way of theologizing. A highly important Conference held in Accra (Ghana), in December 1977, by Third World divines, issued a solemn statement, defining our aims and method. It is not possible to sum up such an important document in a few lines. Its main principle is "contextualization":

We believe that African theology must be understood in the context of African life and culture, and of a creative effort of the nations of Africa to promote a new future, different from the colonial past, and the neo-colonial present. The African situation requires a new methodology, different from the leading Western theologies. African theology, therefore, must reject the prefabricated ideas of North Atlantic theology by defining itself in relation to the people's struggles in its resistance to the structures of domination.

2. Africa's Contribution to Christian Theology

Africa's own contribution to Christian theology, we feel, could consist of treating a set of theological issues vital to us, but that were so far ignored by Eastern and Western divines.

2.1. A Sample of essential issues.

2.1.1. A theology of African customary marriage

For centuries, the Church showed a wise flexibility towards varied customs and laws regulating marriage, just cautioning the faithful not to take part in sacrifices and rites overtly immoral or idolatrous. For centuries, the Church adopted the kinship computation system of every nation she found herself in, except in Africa. According to Jan Van Driessche⁶, the Roman system inspired the early Church canon lawyers; but the Germanic system had also a tremendous influence upon

Church law. When the Holy See decided to bring the variety of kinship computations to some unity, she first adopted the Roman one in the 7th century, but not everybody accepted it. It was Alexander II who in 1066, despite the strong opposition of the Roman faction, succeeded in giving the Germanic system the juridical monopoly it enjoys up to this day. It was not drawn from the bible nor from "sacred tradition". Edward Schillebeeckx maintains that the Church did not always regard the bride's free consent or even her fiance's as an essential element for validity, especially among the Germanic tribes. Consent was required only of the two young people's families or ethnic groups. Only as from the XIth century did women's consent begin to be required.⁷ Putting into practice Pope Gregory the Great's principle that the change of minds and hearts can be only gradual or progressive, his successor, Gregory II sent instructions to St. Boniface in Germany, "With the authority of Apostolic tradition": When on account of illness a wife cannot have intercourse with her husband, and this latter is unable to stand continence, let him marry another woman. In short, the Church's general policy was to make hers the nations' laws and customs that, in her view, were consistent with Christian revelation, or at least not certainly contrary to it. For centuries she gave an impressive example of acculturation. But when it came to preaching the gospel to African peoples, no flexibility was shown. All their social patterns were condemned as a matter of course, and foreign social patterns were forced upon them in the name of Christ.

When I speak of African customary marriage, I am not thinking only of polygamy. Indeed not all African marriages are polygamous. I consider first of all the very form of our marriage, namely, what Africans regard as the essence of matrimonial agreement between the parties. In other words, we want the Church to take seriously African customary wedding, and to acknowledge it as a true, valid and licit marriage, even if the so-called canonical form has not taken place yet. By so doing, the Church would pay due respect to our particular culture, just as it does to European culture. Its laws regarding the "forma canonica" were enacted only after centuries of a free evolution of western civilization. Why

should they be imposed upon us even under penalty of nullity and sin, when they are not evangelical but European? Is it right to achieve universality through unilateral cultural violence?

A second aspect of the problem is the much debated question of monogamy and polygamy: how far is monogamy the law of Christ, and not a mere western social pattern? The Women Liberation Movement might reject the issue as outdated, since, to the mind of most of its members, polygamy is a shameful system of debasement and exploitation. But such a peremptory opinion is not held by the great majority of African women, and we definitely reject the assumption that the western way of life is, in everything, the universal paradigm for mankind to follow. Therefore, even if a growing number of educated or liberated women condemn polygamy, its condemnation by the gospel remains to be established and proved.

2.1.2. Bread and Wine for the Eucharist.

Could not a more serious treatment be given to the food and beverage required for the holy Eucharistic? Our Church leaders are very touchy on this subject which is understandable. But this is not a trifling question: owing to the fact that most sub-saharan countries do not grow corn and vine, our Eucharistic life depends on a hazardous foreign trade. Now, if Christ really meant to impose wheat bread and wine from the vine as the only material fit for the Eucharistic liturgy, it follows from this divine law that the nations whose food and drink are not bread and wine must change their diet on becoming Christians, or import those food-products from foreign countries. A holy blessing for foreign exporters indeed! May be, thanks to the development of international trade and transport, bread and wine are today available almost all over the world. But such a development is not an exegetical or theological argument that, in Christ's view wheat bread and vine product are the only "materia ad validitatem". We should bring irrefutable biblical and theological evidence to support the assertion.

2.1.3. Profession of Christian faith and commitment to justice

The 32nd General Congregation sensitized the jesuits on the subject. We were reminded not to separate a courageous commitment to social and international justice from the preaching of the gospel. Christians at large, but especially Catholics can be proud of the way a lot of priests, nuns, laymen and women, and even bishops in El Salvador, Zimbabwe and elsewhere implement this heroic programme even to the point of shedding their blood.

And yet, we lack a serious theological research on the Christian implications of political domination and economic exploitation within individual States and in international relations; colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism both socialistic and capitalistic, of the great powers as well as of the small ones. So far, the only theological and juridical reflection on these vital problems was tackled by Renaissance scholars such as Victoria, Sepulveda, Domenico Soto; a reflection very partial and favouring the European conquerors' interests; besides, a rather outdated contribution. In our time too many people content themselves with an exchange of emotional outbursts against institutional injustice or against Liberation theology. We happen to make ourselves at home in situations of injustice, of resentment and hatred, of "de facto" class war even within the Church and the religious orders. This massive and scandalous apathy for justice and love should impress us much more than the brilliant subtleties in Christology with which a few theology stars entertain millions of Christians.

2.1.4. African Traditional Religions

Our traditional religions were indiscriminately condemned after a superficial survey, under the charge of primitive superstition, idolatry and immorality. Even our medicare was branded as witchcraft and magic. But a wholesale condemnation passed on us by people who did not vouchsafe so much as to make distinctions, to discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil, failed to convince us. The result was and still is a general confusion and uneasiness; a twofold

or parallel behaviour, one officially "Christian", the other secretly "pagan". Indeed, good Catholics, even priests, religious women and men, sometimes sneak into the dens of traditional doctors, or take part secretly in traditional worship and sacrifices.

Except for a hasty ethical assessment and a juridical provision, little was done to provide a biblical or theological grounding to so vital a problem. We know of a few "concordist" essays on the so-called stepping stones or presumed similarities between African Religions and Christianity. But a genuine theological reflection based upon biblical scholarship, Christian revelation and social sciences is yet to be tackled, or at least seems to be at its very beginning. Now, only such a serious and honest research will free millions of consciences doomed to an hypocritical compliance with interdictions and prohibitions imposed by another culture. Only Christ's truth will make them free, and take off their back a burden the Holy Spirit never meant to lay upon them (cf Acts 15:28).

One might object that classic topics of systematic theology like the Trinity, Christology, Justification and the like, are omitted in favour of a crude anthropocentrism that mistakes religious anthropology for theology. But our sample of priorities do not exclude other essential issues. Furthermore, a great authority such as Karl Barth rejected what he called the anthropocentric theology of the Liberal School and the natural theology of Aquinas. But for his part, Karl Rahner believes "Dogmatic theology today must be theological anthropology, and such an anthropocentric view is necessary and fruitful". For it will not be "possible to say something about God theologically without thereby automatically saying something about man and vice versa".⁶

3. One Concrete Example – African Customary Marriage Reconsidered.

African Churches are able to measure up to the most exacting requirements of the gospel, and their faithfulness to canon law is remarkable. They are not advocating exemptions or general dispensations from the Constitution of the Catholic

Church. But they believe a theological reflection taking into account our social and cultural context is badly needed here.

3.1. Africans and the Canonical Form of Marriage

The Church for a long time resented but tolerated "clandestine marriages". To check them, it was decided in the XIIIth century that, henceforth, Christian wedding should take place during a liturgical service. Nevertheless, only permissibility (*liceitas*) was involved. The sacramental reality of marriage did not depend on this late ritualization. Things changed, at least theoretically, when the Council of Trent issued in 1563 its Decree "Tametsi". Clandestinity, that is failure to marry before an official acknowledged by the Church, invalidated marriage between baptized people. It took a very long time to enforce the new pronouncement on most people. In 1908 the Holy Office felt obliged to issue another decree, "Ne temere" to revive the old one, with apparently more success.

While African theologians or canon lawyers cannot challenge the existing Church law concerning the effect of the canonical form upon validity, they cannot either ignore what is going on in their own society. They cannot ignore that to Africans, children, and above all male children are the Number One end of marriage. Something like a tacit condition is included therefore in any wedding arrangement: "I marry this woman if she can give me children" or "since she can give me children". Furthermore, marriage is not concluded in one formal and determined act, say a bilateral contract between a boy and a girl; but in a long process of agreement between the contracting parties, namely the two families or clans. During the period in which the agreed upon dowry (economic compensation) is paid by the fiancé, marriage has begun to take shape, and the fiancé become more and more husband and wife... When we call this, premarital sex or a state of concubinage, it is in reference to the 1908 decree "Ne Temere".

3.2. Cultural change was mistaken for conversion unto Christ

Leslie Newbigin believes "monogamy is God's will for the human family". "All conversion has ethical contents but conversion is an event which is more than its ethical implications... To be converted is to be brought into that personal relationship with God who is the author and ground of my being..." Therefore, when we "identify conversion with a decision to act in a certain way, whether it be in a matter of polygamy, or slavery, or segregation, we leave the order of grace and freedom, and go into the world of legalism and bondage".⁹

While I take exception to the implication that my personal attitude towards social patterns such as polygamy, slavery or segregation has nothing to do with the order of grace but belongs in the realm of law, I approve of Newbigin's general thesis. For if polygamy or apartheid turns out to be against the law of justice and love, my repudiating them becomes an essential test of the seriousness of my conversion. Nevertheless, the compulsory shift from polygamy to monogamy imposed on African converts as an indispensable condition for baptism seems a tragic mistake. To most of them the shift was a mere cultural change, from African to European way of life, a passage to European civilization more than a real, internal conversion unto Christ.

Furthermore, its moral implications are dreadful. Whatever the superiority of the monogamic union, be it Christian or not, it cannot pretend to abrogate the laws of non-Christian societies: "What have I to do with judging outsiders. Is it not those inside the church whom you have to judge?" (ICor. 5:12). Hence the so-called extra-wives of a polygamist are legitimate wives in his society and religion. Therefore the way they are expelled is tantamount to a generalized repudiation of a society's practice. Paul III, in the Apostolic Constitution "Altitudo" of 1537, taking his stand on I Cor. 7 and on Roman law, decided in favour of the faith: when a polygamist cannot remember which one of his wives was the first, let him pick any one, enter into a contract with her and be baptized. Thus the legitimate wife happens sometimes to be divorced notwithstanding her willingness to live with her convert

husband, her rival being favoured by the man's real or fictitious poor memory. Pius V, in 1571, issued the Constitution "Romani Pontificis", known as "Constitutio Piana", which states: Even if later on, the husband now a Christian and married "in forma canonica" recalls it was another woman that was his first, the Christian marriage holds and the one concluded before conversion is dissolved!

We respect and obey the two papal decisions, but we find no arguments to answer those who brand the whole practice as sexist, unjust and uncharitable. Only the male's soul is cared for; the so-called extra-wives can go to hell, become another polygamist's extra-wives or become prostitutes. The Church is not bothered. The poor women made a covenant in good faith and in conformity with the customs and laws of their own society and religion. Determined rights and duties arise from this arrangement: namely, mutual love, stability, psychological and material security, procreation and rearing of children. But "for the sake of the gospel", in the name of the God of Jesus Christ, the God of justice, love and mercy, in cold blood and serene mercilessness, we chase them away overnight, and deprive them of every human right, of their husband, their children, of their livelihood! All this is supposed to be done "for the sake of the gospel", but the biblical foundation of the above mentioned pastoral approach is rather weak.

To be sure, a few biblical scholars acknowledge they do not find a clear condemnation of polygamy in the New Testament but they pretend it is implicit there. They like to display an impressive panoramic view of marriage from its alleged monogamic institution by God, to its monogamic repristination by Christ, through centuries of less and less tolerated polygamy. John Mackenzie maintains that the Jewish tradition in Genesis contested polygamy, presenting "a monogamous relationship as instituted in creation", and describing "polygamy as a part of the deterioration of mankind".¹⁰ According to Stanislas de Lestapis the patriarchal and nomadic family in Abraham's time was polygamic or even just polygynic, with a conjugal love rather uncouth, lacking jealousy and tenderness. After the exile, polygamy was little practised, and the reform of Ezra will be the decisive step

forward, bringing marriage back to its original monogamic character. Unfortunately, this wonderful fresco is misleading, because irrelevant texts detached from their historical and cultural context are put together and read against a Greco-Roman and Western background. In Israel, even a monogamist was a potential polygamist in case his wife proved barren or gave him no male children. What is more, there was a somewhat compulsory polygamy under the levirate law (Deut. 25: 5ff).¹¹ We do not pretend polygamy is warmly commended by Holy Writ, but it is nowhere directly and clearly condemned.

As regards Jesus' mind on monogamy, the sophisticated interpretations of the famous "exceptive clause" in the Synoptics make it rather little clear. (See Mt. 5: 31-32 and corresponding pericopes in Mk an Lk). All in all, according to brilliant Catholic and Protestant N.T. scholars, who personally reject polygamy, in the pericopes mentioned above, Jesus spoke of and against simultaneous polygamy. He said nothing either of or in favour of monogamy. Therefore, in this matter, our pastoral approach (as far as non-christian people are concerned) should be more cautious and tolerant.

3.3. An Abortive Attempt of a Pastoral Approach

The way our customary marriage is dealt with by the Church is embarrassing to most lay people. They simply do not understand why innocent wives should be expelled overnight, deprived of their husband and children, uncared for as regards their salvation except for a verbal and hypocritical provision such as "Go now and try to find another man whom you'll marry in church". Most of them are scandalized and disgusted. The same poor pastoral approach becomes more and more embarrassing to a lot of concerned bishops and priests, both native and foreign as they realize the absurdity and cruelty of their present policy. A few courageous men try to do something about it, but they receive little encouragement from higher authorities.

3.3.1. A praiseworthy effort, killed too early

Ten years ago, the Liturgical Committee of the Diocese of Doumé (Cameroon) circulated an interesting dossier for the renewal of pastoral theology on African Christian marriage. The document was aiming at some kind of recognition of our tradition in the matter. It pointed out the effects of the rigid application of the canonical form. Indeed, on account of heavy and grave circumstances (economical, personal) often independent of the fiances' free will, these latter are condemned to an indefinite period of total continence. If they decide to live together, they can no longer receive the sacraments. "Thus", the dossier remarked, "marriage has become an exclusively ecclesiastical business, a ritualized thing. The natural right of any individual to conclude a valid marriage was limited for baptized people by a Church ruling. And so, the juridical aspect of the institution was over-stated to the detriment of the human reality of marriage." Consequently, the dossier suggested that a Christian couple sincerely planning to marry in church as soon as their parents will let them, be admitted to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist if they ask for them.

The missionary bishop of Doumé agreed with the Committee, but he cautioned against exaggeration and scandal. As for the native archbishop of the country, he made a hell of a row, pretending that foreign missionaries fostered horizontalism instead of verticalism. He charged them with setting up an inferior Christianity-for-Africans, as if Africans were not able to measure up to the most exacting gospel requirements. The missionaries had no choice but to stop their interesting research. Sure enough, no individual bishop or even episcopal Conference is entitled to change or put aside a catholic law, but they are supposed to help change it for their people's sake. They cannot, in cold blood turn their back on distressing situations where no divine precept is involved! We are not supposed to preach a cheap Christianity or to adulterate the word of God in order to please people, but we must show love and mercy towards everybody, even with those whom we call sinners. The Lord will touch their heart and win them to himself through our charity and respect

rather than through our policy of holy terror.

3.3.2. A timid suggestion

I would like to quote here a few lines from the stinging article of James Downey against those who advocate charity and tolerance towards Christian polygamists:

At the risk of presenting a caricature, he wrote, one might sum up as follows the reason which for many is most compelling in favour of allowing polygamists to membership of the Church. The Church is the instrument of the grace of Christ. She channels that grace especially through the sacraments. It goes without saying that all Christians, not least the weaker members have need of these means of grace... There are many who have a sincere desire to avail of the saving power of Christ through his Church, but who are at present precluded from doing so because of a regulation which, through no fault of their own, they cannot obey. Indeed their only sin is that they have been faithful to their own cultural patrimony....¹²

Now Downey maintains that this argument, though sound, is only partial. "It rightly visualizes the Church as a manifestation of the priestly office of Christ". But, to him, the prophetic role of the Church is not taken into account. He reminds us that in the Old Testament "prophecy was a special gift from God, in virtue of which its recipients, critical of religious formalism, looked for a future kingdom of justice and peace. Applying this principle to polygamy, Downey affirms that "the Church has obligations which transcend the individual, obligations to society, and a duty to proclaim the truth". Since those who call for a change in church discipline admit that polygamy is not the ideal proposed by Christ, let them also admit the demands of the prophetic ministry, namely that "Christian marriage be, not just a means of grace for individual christian couples, but also a leaven within society, whether that society be christian or not".¹³ In other words, let the Church be more flexible in her own regulation as regards the canonical form, and let her pay due respect to African traditional marriage.

4. Conclusion

After this rapid survey, it might be clear by now, how ambiguous are the unity and universality the Church so firmly advocates. There is a continuous sliding from Revelation and Faith to Theology and social organization and vice versa. While the adhesion to the word of God taught by the Church is "de jure" one and universal, the philosophical and cultural formulation of Christian faith is, of necessity and "de facto" multifarious, because no philosophy and no human culture enjoy the absoluteness of the word of God.

Thanks to the Apostles' vigilance, the Christianization process in Europe was spared a Judaizing stage. They were lucky enough to receive almost separately a religion moulded in Jewish culture, and a Hellenistic philosophy from a pagan world. So no culture or philosophy was imposed upon European young Churches indissolubly woven with the Christian faith. They were spared a mere transplantation of a ready made semitic Christianity, of a wholesale package of theology, liturgy, discipline, laws and customs. Such a situation was auspicious for native cultures and philosophies to offer a significant contribution. The outcome was a Christianity really indigenous in its expression, but at the same time rooted in the one Apostolic faith. This is a wonderful example of a successful inculturation or incarnation of Christianity.

Christian universality, nay some kind of unity in theological expression is no doubt essential. But it won't be achieved through theological tricks, threats or enticements, because it is a spiritual gift from on high. It requires on the part of our older Churches, not imperialistic short cuts or sabre rattlings ("Submit to our Western universal theology or be anathema!"), nor unconvincing sophistry (Aristotelian or Thomistic philosophy is the basic perennial philosophy of humankind), but spiritual power: humility, patience, tolerance, willingness to admit that something relevant will come from the Galilee of the Third World communities. We have no choice but to admit a healthy pluralism, that is a healthy inculturation of Christianity; and the essential field of inculturation is theology.

ENDNOTES

1. Hebga wrote his paper for the international meeting of SEDOS during the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa 1994.
2. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, LXI, 30 Sept. 1969, No.9.
3. *II Giorono*, Oct. 27, 1974.
4. *La Chiesa nel Mondo*, VIII, 44 Oct. 30, 1974.
5. R. Panikkar, "Metatheological or Diacritical Theology as Fundamental Theology", *Concilium* vol. 46.
6. *L'Empêchement de Parenté en Droit Coutumier Africain*, Paris: Desclée, 1959, p. 113ff.
7. *Marriage Secularly Reality and Saving Mystery*, London: Sheed & Ward, 1965, p. 33ff.
8. *Schriften Zur Theologie*, VIII, Part. I, chap. 2, Transl. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972, p. 28.
9. *Honest Religion for Secular Man*, London, 1966, p. 74.
10. *Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 549.
11. See Werner Plautz, "Monogamie und Polygynies im Alten Testament" *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 75: 34, 1963.
12. "Polygamy, the wrong reasons", *AFER* 17/ 3: 1975, p. 148.
13. *Ibid*, 149-150.

Two Decades Of Religious Conflicts In Nigeria: A Recipe For Peace

Emefie Ikenga-Metuh

0. Introduction: Trends of Ferocious Riots.

Frequently violent religious riots characterized Nigerian socio-religious life during the past two decades. From the 1980 Maitatsine riots in Kano which claimed over 4,177 lives, to the Funtua religious riot of 1993 at which 50 lives were reported lost, there have been no less than fourteen religious riots. Thus, there has been averagely one religious riot every year. A quick survey of these riots shows not only their frequency, but also their ferocity.¹

Although the leader of the Maitatsine sect, Muhammad Murwa was killed during the 1980 uprising, his lieutenants went underground, regrouped, and struck again repeatedly. The first in Oct. 1992, took place simultaneously at Bulunkutu near Maiduguri, Rigasa in Kaduna and parts of Kano states resulting in over 175 deaths including some members of the police force. They struck again in February 1984 in Jimeta, in Gongola state where about 763 casualties were recorded. Yet again in April 1985, in Gombe in Bauchi State, at which many people, Muslims and non-muslims alike were ritually killed and mosques and churches were destroyed. The Maitatsine uprisings though an intra-Muslim conflict (the Maitatsine group claimed to be a revivalist though syncretist Islamic movement challenging certain Muslim teachings and practices, as well shall see), appear to have created a precedent. They not only inspired a string of religious riots the country within a decade, but these spilt over and resulted also in inter-religious conflicts.

The first Christian/Muslim disturbance occurred in 1986, at Ilorin, in Kwara State, when a Christian Palm Sunday procession which insisted on passing through the Muslim

parts of the town was attacked by Muslim youths resulting in many injuries. In Ibadan University, the same year, Muslim students burnt the carved door of the chapel of the Resurrection with the image of Christ on it, in protest against the position of the cross in front of another church in the campus which they claimed was obstructing their view when they pray in their mosque facing Mecca. The church was built long before the mosque!²

The Kafanchan riots in Kaduna State in March 1987, was the first of a series of inter-religious riots involving Christians and Muslims during this period which assumed the dimensions of inter-communal as well as inter-ethnic uprisings spreading over wide areas. The religious cleavage also followed the socio-ethnic cleavage. The Christians belonged almost entirely to the small ethnic minority groups sandwiched between the Muslim majority who mainly belong to the dominant Hausa ethnic group. Thus the religious aspect of the conflict was compounded by the ethnic and socio-political interests involved.³

The Bauchi riots of April 1991, fought between the ethnic Christian minorities of the Tafawa Balewa areas of Bauchi State and the dominant Hausa/Muslim community followed a similar pattern. It quickly spread to Bauchi, the State capital, and resulted in the loss of hundreds of lives and the destruction of many churches, mosques and private property worth millions of naira. So too was the Zongo Kataf riots of February 1992, fought between the Zongo Kataf, an ethnic Christian minority, and the immigrant but dominant Hausa/Muslim community. The Kano religious riots of Oct. 1991 was an urban phenomenon. It began when the Muslims in protest against the visit of a German based Christian evangelist, Reinhard Bonke, began to attack Christians and to burn their churches and homes. Many people were killed and the destruction caused was immense.⁴

A pattern is discernible in this string of religious disturbances. Firstly, although religious disturbances had occurred in Nigeria in the past, they acquired greater frequency and ferocity from the late seventies into the eighties and nineties. Secondly, most of these violent disturbances occurred in Northern Nigeria and almost all of

them involved Muslims who constitute the majority religious group in the area. This is true of both the intra- and the inter-religious disturbances. The inter-religious disturbances are usually between the Christians and the Muslims who constitute the two biggest and well organized religious groups in the country. The adherents of Traditional African Religion as a group for the most part are rarely involved, except perhaps where the inter-religious disturbances follow the ethnic cleavage. Finally, most inter-religious disturbances usually develop into inter-ethnic conflicts even where they began as a purely religious disagreement. The reverse is also often the case; namely, some socio-ethnic conflicts are often deflected and fought out under inter-religious banners. These trends give rise to a number of questions. Why have religious disturbances acquired such frequency and ferocity in the late seventies into the eighties and nineties in Nigeria? What are the factors which contributed to the incidences of religious riots in Northern Nigeria? Which are the religious causes of these conflicts, which are the socio-political, ethnic, and economic causes? To what extent could these disturbances be said to be fundamentally caused by religious factors, such as religious intolerance, misunderstandings, or ignorance of each others faiths? Or, are they fundamentally due to unresolved socio-political, ethnic, and economic tensions in the area? Or both?

The first part of this work, will attempt to give the religio-historical and socio-political background to these religious conflicts and disturbances in Northern Nigeria. The second part will try to identify the religious as well as the socio-political factors responsible for the disturbance? In conclusion, I will give recommendations which could serve as a recipe for inter-religious peace and harmony in Nigeria.

2. Religio-historical Background to the Religious Disturbances in Northern Nigeria

The Nigerian nation which emerged after Independence is a pluralistic society in many ways - ethnic, linguistic and religious. There are over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own language, culture and religion. Politically, Nigeria was a federation composed of three large regions: the Northern

Region, the Western Region and the Eastern Region. Islam and Christianity had made in-roads into many areas and had won large followers. Thus the religious map of Nigeria after Independence showed that a larger proportion of the population in Northern Nigeria were Muslims, the vast majority of the people of Eastern Nigeria was Christian, while, the two religions were roughly equally represented in Western Nigeria. Reasons why incidences of these religious riots were more often in Northern Nigeria, could only be seen against the background of the religio-political history of the area.⁵

The Jihad of Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio 1804 to 1817, is a watershed in the religio-political history of Northern Nigeria. Islam was first introduced into Bornu area of Northern Nigeria in the eleventh century, and in the Hausa states between the 14th and 15th centuries.⁶ However, until the Jihad, Islam was mainly the religion of the city dwellers, notably the upper classes. The mass of the people in the rural areas retained their traditional religion. The chiefs themselves for the most part were nominal Muslims. One of the aims of the Jihad was to reform the syncretist Islam of the Hausa states of the period.⁷ The amazingly successful Jihad resulted in the founding of a Caliphate which spanned much of the area of what is today Northern Nigeria, and beyond, including parts of today's Niger, and Cameroon Republics. The states that emerged after the Jihad, were theocratic states, organized into a Caliphate which was in fact a loose federation under the Sultan of Sokoto, usually a descendant and successor of Uthman dan Fodio. Many of the tribal groups which had not accepted Islam came under the rulership of the emirates, and at best were compelled to pay tributes according to the Islamic law, and at worst were regarded as reserves for slave raiding. Some tribal groups, however, escaped the control of the emirate system by taking refuge in hilly areas. This was roughly the situation in Northern Nigeria when the Christian penetration of the area began in the second half of the 19th century followed by the British colonial occupation at the turn of the century.

The one fact which above others influenced the status of Islam and its relationships with other religious groups in

Northern Nigeria during the colonial period and into the post-independent Nigeria, was the promise made by Lord Lugard, the first British colonial governor of Nigeria, to the Sultan of Sokoto, Waziri, in 1903, after the fall of the town, to the effect that even though the Sultan and the Emirs were to be appointed by the Chief Commissioner (provincial administrator) "the Emirs who are appointed will rule over the people as of old time and take such taxes as are approved by the High Commissioner; the Alkalis and Emirs will hold the Law courts as of old ... government will in no way interfere with the Mohammedan religion".⁸ The statement that the Emirs were to continue to rule their people as of old, formed the basis of the "Indirect Rule" system which became the administrative policy of the British colonial government, in Northern Nigeria. While, the pledge that government will in no way interfere in Islamic religion, became the official religious policy of the colonial government which had far reaching effects not only on the status of Islam, but also the status of other religions in the area especially Christianity and African Traditional Religion.

By the Indirect rule system, all the territories claimed by the Emirs as part of their territories in pre-colonial times, came under the emirate rule. These included not only the cities inhabited mainly by the Muslims, but also the rural areas where some non-Islamized tribes lived. These were subjected to the Islamic (Sharia) laws which operated in the Emirates. Administratively, these were called "pagans within the Emirates". This effectively meant that the British recognized the status of the tribal groups within the Emirates as colonies of the Muslim Hausa/Fulani rulers. They were thus colonies within the British colonial Nigeria. The Emirs appointed the District Heads, the village Heads, and even the Wards Heads who were usually Muslims or had to convert to Islam to fit in within the administrative structure. On the other hand, Direct Rule was applied to "pagan areas" outside the Emirates. This meant that these areas had their chiefs drawn from their own people, who ruled their own people, and were directly responsible to the British authorities.

Missiologically, this policy of upholding the authority of the Fulani emirs, undoubtedly gave great prestige to Islam and assisted in its spread as the "Pax Britannica" hastened the

opening up of the country. To fulfil its promise that government would not interfere in Islamic religion, all Christian missionary work was forbidden in Muslim areas. The expressed permission of the Emirs was needed to undertake missionary work among pagans living in the emirates. While, Christian missionary work was in most cases encouraged in "pagan areas" outside the emirates. In townships which developed around some Muslim towns like Kano, Kastina, Sokoto, Bauchi and so forth, other religious groups were allowed to operate only in the "Sabon Garis" (new towns) populated mainly by immigrant workers from Southern Nigeria. As these Southerners were for the most part Christians, the "Sabon Garis" were easily identifiable as the Christian parts of the towns, especially during the inter-religious disturbances as we shall see.⁹

The Post-war period witnessed an increasing awareness among the non-muslim peoples of Northern Nigeria. This consciousness manifested itself in two different directions. On the one hand, there was a tendency for some to become assimilated to the dominant Hausa-Fulani culture and Islam. On the other, there was another tendency to realize that the common problems and interests of the non-Muslim group as a whole lay in asserting themselves as a group distinct from the dominant Hausa-Muslim group, and to assert their autonomy and self determination. This was stimulated by a number of factors connected with the Christian Church. Young people who had received their education in scattered mission primary schools in their ethnic communities, came together in such post primary institutions as Gindri, at Church conferences, and the armed forces, and discussed their problems and planned to provide leadership to their people in the bid to free their communities from Hausa-Fulani Muslim domination. Their grievances were often articulated in terms of the ethno-cultural and religious differences.

This struggle expressed itself during the struggle for Nigerian Independence through the formation of a number of political parties in the central belt, and the movement for the creation of the Middle Belt State out of Northern Nigeria. The demand was justified on religious grounds. Fears of religious persecution and discrimination in the North by the Muslim

majority, claims that the Hausa-Fulani majority had always threatened to force all the non-Muslims in the region into Islam after Independence, and complaints that non-Muslims were tried in Alkali courts, were some of the reasons given to support the demand. When the demand for the creation of the Middle-belt State was presented to the Commission of Enquiry into the Fears of Minorities and Means of Allaying them set up by the British government before Independence, it was not granted and the situation persisted into post-independence period.¹⁰

The emergence of General Gowon, a Christian from one of the minority ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria, as Head of State of Nigeria, and the subsequent creation of states in Nigeria constituted a turning point in Christian/Muslim relations and the struggle for self-determination of the minorities in Nigeria especially in the North. The process of the creation of states which began with the creation of twelve states out of the three regions in 1966, nineteen states in 1976, twenty-one states in 1987, reached its peak with the division of Nigeria into of 30 states. There are now 14 states in the south, and sixteen states in the North. Out of these sixteen states in the North, three have a substantial Christian majority and have Christian governors and legislatures. While five others have significant Christian minorities. The other eight, are predominantly Muslim but have sizeable pockets of Christian communities. This arrangement has certainly solved some of the problems, but have generated others, and in some places has exacerbated existing ones. Muslims in now Christian controlled states resent the erosion of their powers and feel threatened. Intense rivalry has arisen in states in which the two religious communities appear balanced, while pockets of Christians in Muslim controlled States feel frustrated.

More importantly, the local government reforms and local government elections of 1987, and 1990, for the first time threatened the powers of the Emirs and the emirate system which had traditionally provided governments at this level. There now exist overlap of powers and conflict of jurisdictions between the newly elected local government councils and the emirate administrations. Many local government councils in the non-muslim ethnic communities

came under the control of non-muslims (mainly Christians), and these began to question the continued relevance of emirate rule and the authority of the emirs to continue to rule them and appoint their chiefs, village and ward heads some of whom are Muslims and/or are non-indigenes. Many of the religious disturbances as will be seen occurred during this period of politico-structural changes in Nigeria, and in many cases arose or are aggravated by issues connected with these changes. This may partly explain the frequency and violence characterizing these constant disturbances in Northern Nigeria during the period.

No less important is the socio-economic background of the disturbances. Northern Nigeria, traditionally, was an extremely socially stratified and polarized society. The polarity between the Hausa/Fulani ruling class and the ordinary Hausa whom they conquered and ruled over, and the Muslim and Non-muslim elements of the emirates, are compounded by the polarity between the extremely rich, made up of the ruling class and the merchants, on the one hand, and the poorer classes made up of the peasants (talakawa) and the labouring class. Colonialism not only confirmed and accentuated this arrangement, but also added others. The suspicion and negative attitude to Western education and culture by many Northern Muslims marginalized many young Muslims in a rapidly changing and modernizing Nigerian society. Many Muslim children of the poorer classes begin life as *Almajiris* (pupils of the Koranic schools), who go about begging to pay their Koranic teachers, and graduate from these schools only to find that their knowledge though very useful for their religious life, no longer fitted them for better placement in the modern Nigerian society. They therefore end up in many towns as unskilled labourers, hawkers, beggars, and unemployed. These easily fall prey to Islamic fundamentalist preachers, and easily provide the fodder in the hands of the rich political class to fuel any riot, even for the mere promise of the opportunity to loot. The economic recession in Nigeria brought about by the collapse in early 1980s of the price of oil which is the main sustenance of the Nigerian economy, intensified the strain arising from this socio-economic problem.¹¹

Finally, there is the factor of the wave of fundamentalism which appeared in both Christian and Muslim circles in the country from around the mid-seventies. In Islam in addition to the two traditional fraternities in Nigerian Islam; Kadiriyya and Tijaniyya, there arose a few others around this period like the Izalatul Bidiati-wa-Ikamatul Sunati, and the Shiites who have more fundamentalist and less tolerant inclinations. At the extreme of this group was the Maitatsine, a syncretist, fundamentalist and violent sect which as mentioned earlier, unleashed the series of devastating religious uprisings which ran intermittently from the 1980 to the mid-eighties.¹² On the Christian side, the period also saw an increasing mushrooming of fundamentalist Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches in the country. These groups, unlike the mainline churches and the Aladura churches which evangelized the country during the pre-colonial and colonial eras, are less compromising in their attitude to inter-religious relations, and certainly more assertive and sometimes provocative in their evangelistic campaigns. The various ways and extent these and other factors contributed to the incidents and intensity of the religious disturbances in Nigeria during the period, will be seen from the analysis of the events leading to some of these disturbances and their aftermaths.

2. Two Decades of Religious Riots in Northern Nigeria

The many religious riots which took place in Northern Nigeria from the eighties into the early nineties could be grouped in three broad categories:-

(a) Intra-Religious Disturbances: These took place mainly between the different denominations or sects within Islam. These range from minor local skirmishes, like the clash between the Izala and the Tijaniyya in Gombe, Bauchi state in June 1978; to the wide scale religious uprising like the Maitatsine Uprisings in the eighties.

(b) There are the Inter-religious conflicts arising from differences over religious matters but later spilling over and assuming socio-ethnic dimensions. Examples in this category

could be the Kaduna riots of 1987, and the Kano riots of Oct. 1991.

(c) Inter-religious conflict which began as socio-ethnic conflicts, but were later articulated and fought out under the idiom of inter-religious conflicts. Typical examples are the Bauchi riots of 1991, and the Zongo-Kataf riots of May 1992. We shall study one example from each category. We shall try to analyze the development of events in each case in order to determine the casual factors of the religious unrest and the implications for the search for peaceful inter-religious relationship in Nigeria.

2.1. The Maitatsine Religious Riots - 1980 to 1985

Between 1980 and 1985, there were five Maitatsine inspired riots in different part of Northern Nigeria. The first and the most devastating occurred in Yan-Awaki Ward in Kano in Dec. 1980. It was quelled only after the intervention of the army. The death toll was 4,177 lives. The leader, Mohammed Murwa, was killed and 1,673 of his followers were arrested. The second organized by his followers who had gone underground and regrouped, took place in October 1982 almost simultaneously in the Bulunkutu Ward of Maiduguri, and the Rigassa/Tudun Wada ward of Kaduna several hundred miles apart. About two people lost their lives in these two encounters. Then again in February 1984, in Dobeli Ward, Jimeta-Yola, in Gongola State, and again in Pantami ward, Gombe in Bauchi state in April 1985. The total loss of lives in these later two uprisings was close to 600.

Muhammad Murwa, the so called Maitatsine, was from the Kotok tribe in the Cameroons. His unorthodox and inflammatory preaching had already attracted the attention of the Islamic authorities in Kano in 1962. The then emir of Kano, Muhammed Sanusi, had him imprisoned for three months, and thereafter repatriated. After the deposition of the Emir, Maitatsine stealthily re-entered Kano and continued with his preaching. And by 1973, he had built up a followership of over 10,000 members. Doctrinally, Maitatsine, claimed to be a prophet, on a par with Prophet Mohammed. This claim

is blasphemous to all orthodox Muslims. The Maitatsine group had its own mode of worship from those of the orthodox Muslim communities. Aspects of initiation into the sect allegedly included such horrendous practices as the mixing and drinking of human blood and the tattooing of members. During their uprisings, their killings had a ritualistic bent. They would, for example, slit open their victims' throats, gorge out their eyes, and extract their teeth.¹³ Another aspect of the Maitatsine eccentricism, had to do with its aversion to modern life especially technical gadget. For them, it is profane to wear a wrist watch, ride a bicycle, or any mechanically propelled vehicle. Passers-by near their praying ground who wore any of these gadget were likely to be attacked.

The presence of the Maitatsine group in Kano became threatening when they began to carry arms to their preaching grounds and to evict people in the Yan-awaki quarters in Kano from their homes to accommodate the growing numbers of their membership. The state security forces intervened when a large numbers of such displaced persons turned up as refugees in either parts of the town and reported the atrocities being perpetrated by the group in the Yan-Awaki quarter. The encounter which followed resulted in the casualties mentioned above. The other uprisings followed a similar pattern. Various explanations of the Maitatsine uprising have been given. Bala Takaya explains the Maitatsine uprising as a socio-political phenomenon. According to him;

Like all other major religious uprisings, however, it is basically a power struggle, employing the mass mobilization potential of Islam in Nigeria for the purpose. The sooner it was seen as such, the better for the purpose the understanding of the issue.¹⁴

He rightly noted that the spark-off points of all these riots, were the depressed parts of the cities like Yan-awaki, Bulunkutu, Rigasa, Bobeli etc, which he described as "the republics of the neglected" where governmental attention and also security surveillance is minimal. These parts of the cities, harbour mostly the unemployed, unskilled rural migrants, and, most significant in relation to the Maitatsine

issue, poor migrant Islamic scholars struggling for recognition and patronage. Both elements thus constitute part of the reservoir of thugs ready for the employ of any social or political miscreant. Who may be the powers behind the mask who sponsor them? He opines that they could be either of two "analytical groups":-

(1) 'A powerful but still a faceless political elite group with a design to topple the political system and shift the locus of power for its own benefit through a major revolutionary social upheaval in a form that will appear as an Islamic Jihad (holy war). (2) And/Or, a group of opportunistic mallams (Islamic teachers) who because they are not patronized by the leadership of the traditional orthodox Islam in Nigeria, feel marginalized and are therefore critical of the system and the modern values which sustain it. These type of Mallams adopt puritanical fundamentalism and radicalism as tools and use their students and adherents as readily mobilizable human materials to foment trouble. These Mallams could also easily be patronized and/or recruited by the first group for the planned social upheaval under the guise of religion.¹⁵

One cannot but recognize and appreciate the social, political and economic dimensions of the Maitatsine and other religious uprisings. The fact that these uprisings took place in the poorer parts of the city, and the people involved are mainly the marginalized sectors of the community are undeniable facts. The existence of the unpatronized and marginalized Mallams, and their influence over their followers are also characteristic features of the Islamic communities of Northern Nigeria. However, this explanation like some other socio-political explanations of religious phenomena, appear to underplay their religious dimension. What do we have in the Maitatsine uprising? Is it politics using religion to achieve essentially political goals, or religion striving for religious goals, using basically religious and available socio-political means? Or is it a combination of both; a religio-political goal, achieved through available religious and political means. This paper is of the opinion that the Maitatsine uprising is in fact better explained as a failed attempt to set up a theocratic state in accordance with accepted Islamic traditions especially in West African Islam. In Islam, religion cannot be divorced

from politics.

There were no less than five successful Jihads in West Africa in the 18th and 19th centuries, the most successful of which led by Uthaman Dan Fodio covered much of what is today's Northern Nigeria, parts of Niger, and the Cameroons Republics. These like other revival movements in Islam had the common objective of "a return to the pure and primitive faith of Islam, purged of heresies and accretions". This implied the attempt to restore the original model of the Islamic state, such as existed in the time of the Prophet and the first four caliphs - "a state in which social justice, is administered in the light of the Sharia by God fearing rulers".¹⁶ Although Sura 4:59 of the Qu'ran enjoins believers to "obey God, and obey the Apostle, and those charged with authority among you", this injunction in Islamic traditions is correlated with the ideal of "Righteousness" and need for the Sharia. The Sharia in Islamic beliefs in the narrowest sense is the Islamic code of laws. In its broadest sense, it is the total way of life which for Muslims is best realized under an Islamic state. In any case, devout Muslims are conscious of the fact that they should at all times strive towards the ultimate establishment of an Islamic state when situations permit, as any other arrangement is only temporary and second best.

From the point of view of orthodox Islam as practised by the majority of Muslims in Nigeria, the Maitatsine is a non-Islamic and irreligious movement. However, there is no doubt that the Maitatsine uprising is a religious phenomenon, syncretic no doubt, but inspired by the Islamic traditions of revivalism, both from the point of view of the participants, and the religio-doctrinal traditions which inspired it. The syncretic features of the Maitatsine movement is obvious. The savagery and sadistic violence which it used are certainly irreligious by every known standard. The many rituals which characterize its practices show some influence of traditional African religion, but grossly misunderstood and abused.

However, there is no doubt that Mohammed Murwa, believed that he was engaged in some form of Jihad and some form of revivalism. He entertained the aspiration of setting up a theoretic state. However, he shows a total ignorance or misconception of the doctrinal basis and aims and objectives of the Jihad. He was engaged not in revival of purified Islam

but in the enthronement of syncretism. This is borne out by the fact that he was under the illusion that he was a successor or a substitute of the Prophet Muhammad. It is alleged that in copy of the Koran which he used, it is seen that he substituted his name wherever the name of the Prophet Muhammad appeared. This is blasphemous to orthodox Islam.¹⁷ His syncretism and excesses are due to ignorance and misconceptions of Islam and other faiths with which Islam must have to relate to in the modern Nigerian pluralist society. This ignorance also explains his fundamentalism, intolerance and fanaticism. For the vacuum left by absence of reflected knowledge of one's faith is easily made up by fanatical adherence to and enforcement, sometimes through violent means, of undiluted truths taken from the Sacred Books often misunderstood. The Maitatsine experience demonstrates, the folly of aspiring to set up a theocratic state in a modern pluralist society like Nigeria, and the necessity of inculcating sound knowledge of one's own faith and some knowledge of the faith of other religious groups for harmonious inter-religious relationship in a pluralist society.

2.2. Socio-Ethnic Religious Disturbances – The Kaduna Riots

Between 1976 and 1986, a number of incidents occurred which threatened to turn the uneasy peace and suspicions which existed between Muslims and Christians into open conflicts or even violence. Somehow, with much patience, dialogue and careful management, they were contained for some time. First there was the demand by Muslims in 1978, for the entrenchment of the Federal Sharia court of appeal in the Nigerian Constitution, then the burning of a Christian Church building by Muslims in Kano in 1981, and the surreptitious enrolment of Nigeria as a member of the Organisation of Islamic conference (O.I.C.) in 1986. After some hot verbal exchanges followed by some meaningful dialogue, some compromises were worked out on the Sharia issue, which provided for a chamber in the Federal Court of Appeal to hear appeals from the states' Sharia courts of Appeal.¹⁸ And a committee was set up to look into the O.I.C. (its recommendations are yet to be made public). Violence was

immediately averted but the tension remained. It was no surprise therefore when a misunderstanding over some religious matter in a College of Education Kafanchan in 1987, erupted into an inter-religious violence which engulfed a large part of Northern Nigeria. That it erupted in Kafanchan is no accident, because there are other issues, notably socio-ethnic tensions involved.

Kafanchan founded in 1810, during the Jihad by one Malam Usman, one of the leaders of the Jihad, is now the headquarters of the Jamma'a emirate. However, paradoxically, Kafanchan today is a predominantly Christian town, since, besides the dominant immigrant Hausa/Fulani Muslim community, only a few people from the surrounding tribes (formerly pagan areas within the emirate) had embraced Islam, preferring instead to embrace Christianity probably as a symbol of protest against ages of domination and oppression by their Hausa/Fulani Muslim overlords.

The problem began on 5th March 1987, during an Open Air Fellowship Meeting (with mounted loudspeakers) of a Christian group, the **Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA)**, at the College of Education in the town. The rally was advertised with a banner hung in front of the college premises which read "Welcome to the Jesus Campus". Giving witness during the fellowship, one Abubakar Bello, who allegedly recently converted from Islam to Christianity, was said to have made a comparison between the Bible and the Qu'ran. A Muslim female student who overheard him, found this so odious that she went up to the rostrum and challenged him. A shouting match with fistcuffs ensued. Other Moslems soon joined. It soon developed into a fight between Christian and Muslim students which left a Muslim student dead. The fight spread into the town and continued the next day leaving nine people dead. Two Mosques were burnt and some private property destroyed.

The news spread, and by the next day, the riot spread to the predominantly Muslim areas like Zaria, Katsina, Kano and the state capital Kaduna. In these areas Muslim youths joined by **almajaris** (Koranic pupil beggars) attacked Christians, burnt hundreds of churches, hotels and business houses belonging to Christians. At Wusasa, the oldest church in Northern Nigeria, St. Bartholomew's was also burnt. The

family home of former Head of State, Yakubu Gowon (a Christian) was burnt, and his late father's grave was defaced. It took the intervention of the armed forces to restore order.¹⁹

What were the causes of this religious disturbance? What were the religious causes, what are the non-religious causes? To facilitate the objective assessment of the causal factors of this unfortunate incident, it may be helpful to distinguish between the remote and immediate causes of the riots. Apparently, the immediate cause was the open-air revival meeting organized by a Christian student organisation in a college environment which is multi-religious, and a testimony which was religiously provocative.

Be that as it may, however, ordinarily, in the normal Nigerian context, incidents such as these would not be considered provocative. Open air religious activities, like crusades, preachings, processions, display of banners, posters are in common use in Nigeria by both Christians and Muslims. Besides, the college in question was a formerly Catholic teachers' College, now taken over by government and a former college chapel still stands in the middle of the college premises, and is still used today as a parish church. In most Nigerian towns, loud speakers mounted on church towers or Minarets of Mosques, or even on moving vehicles blaring out religious propaganda at sometimes unwilling listeners are daily experiences. Nigerians have learnt to live with these nuisances and to pay a deaf ear to them.

However, in the circumstances of the time and place, this event at the College of education could certainly be construed to be provocative. The time period, 1987, was when the tension arising from the Sharia and O.I.C. questions was at its peak. The religious temperature in the country was high and fully charged. This tension and polarization were further aggravated by the statement credited to Sheik Abubakar Mohmoud Gumi, the former Grand Khadi of Northern Nigeria, and the King Faisal laureate. According to him;

Once you are Moslem, you cannot accept to choose a non-moslem to be your leader,.... If Christians do not accept the Muslim leadership, then we have to divide the country.²⁰

Few Muslims would have put the Muslim political outlook so bluntly. However, to many Nigerian Christians, the statement only confirmed their fears that this was the hidden agenda of the Muslim hierarchy in Northern Nigeria. It needed only a minor incident such as the Christian revival crusade in the College of Education to spark off a conflagration.

The socio-ethnic context, is equally indicative. Kafanchan is a glaring example of the unease of predominantly Christian areas inhabited by groups of ethnic minorities, still ruled by small immigrant Hausa/Fulani Muslim feudal lords in the post-independent Nigerian society. So that incidents such as this, provide opportunities to these minority ethnic groups to express their anger and frustration, and to bring their struggle to throw off this yoke to the notice of the complacent Nigerian public. This is borne out by the fact that once the disturbance went outside the college campus, the religious cleavage immediately also became a socio-ethnic cleavage, with the Hausa/Fulani Muslims, the over lords on one side, and the Christian ethnic minorities (the ruled on the other). In fact, the Kafanchan disturbance, turned out to be a precedent and inspiration to Christianized ethnic minorities in other emirates in Northern Nigeria to rise against their Hausa/Fulani Muslim overlords. In some cases they succeeded in expelling some Hausa/Fulani settlers from some of their villages. Thus the Bauchi religious disturbances of 1991, involved the Christianized ethnic minorities of the Tafawa Balewa local government, of Bauchi state. They rebelled against the emirate rule imposed from Bauchi, and temporally succeeded in expelling some Hausa/Fulani settlers. So, too the Zongo Kataf religious disturbances of 1992 was aimed at throwing off the yoke of the emirate rule imposed from Zaria, and also went as far as driving away all Hausa/Fulani settlers in the locality.

Although the feuds were fought along religio-ethnic lines, the religious causes of the latter disturbances are more difficult to see. For example, the incident which sparked off the Bauchi riots was said to be the denial to butchers, natives of the area who are non-muslims, the right to use the same abattoir as the Muslim butchers. Nevertheless when the disturbance developed, it took on an inter-Christian/Muslim dimension. Such that the main target of the rioters were not

only churches and mosques, but also, Christians and Muslims some of whom were from other parts of Nigeria, especially Igbo Christians who are known to come from Southern Nigeria, and could be said to have no stake whatsoever in the socio-ethnic conflict. They were probably attacked by elements among the rioters who saw them as not only another Christian enemy, and also by outlaws who took the opportunity to loot their property. So it is difficult to isolate the religious factors from the socio-ethnic and even political and economic factors.

2.3. The Kano Riots – An Inter-Religious Conflict.

The Kano religious disturbance of 15th Oct. 1991, could be given as a possible example of a basically inter-religious Muslim/Christian conflict. The dispute which sparked off the riots was certainly religious in nature. It arose out of the visit of a German-born preacher, Rev. Reinhardt Bonke, who was invited by a Christian organization, the Christ for All Nation Ministry, to conduct a week long crusade in Kano. Muslim protests against the crusade, which began with thousands of Muslim youths who trooped out into the town to tear up all posters, banners, and handbills advertising the crusade, soon degenerated into burning of homes, shops, and cars and attacking and killing of people in the "Sabon Gari" quarters of the town inhabited by non-indigenes, most of whom are Christians. When the police delayed in intervening, the Christians regrouped and drove away the protesters from the Sabon Gari quarters. The protesters then moved to other quarters of Kano, where they indiscriminately attacked and killed many non-indigenes, Christians and Muslims alike. At that stage, it appeared that the riot had also assumed a socio-ethnic dimension. Thousands of non-indigenes fled to the police and army barracks as refugees. Many who could, fled the town. By the time the police restored order, scores of lives had been lost, and properties worth millions of naira had been destroyed.²¹

Both Christians and Muslims blamed the government for the misunderstanding that led to the riots. The Christians claimed that they had obtained permission from the government to

hold the crusade at the Race Course grounds, and had even paid a N50,000 (fifty thousand naira) deposit to secure the venue. They were later advised to move the venue to St. Thomas college play ground, which they accepted to comply with. They blamed the government for failing to stop the Muslim protests which were publicly announced by town criers the evening before. The Muslims on their part accused the government for double standards. They claimed that their application for permission to invite a South African Muslim preacher was turned down by government and they saw no reason why the same government would grant permission for a Christian crusade in a predominantly Muslim city like Kano.

Government on its part explained that it turned down the Muslim request on purely political grounds: because Nigeria then had cut off all relations with South African. Some independent observers admit that even though Rev. Bonke had very successful crusades in other Nigerian cities, like Lagos, Enugu, Ilorin, e.t.c; it was unwise to have permitted the crusade in a place like Kano, which as Rev. Bonke himself admitted in an interview with the B.B.C. (British Broadcasting Corporation) "is associated with religious riots". This only demonstrates how tenuous and extremely delicate religious tolerance is in Nigeria, and the need to cultivate the attitude of fostering religious peace and harmony among Nigerians.

3. Conclusion - An Evaluation.

The analysis above has shown up not only some of the causes of the constant religious riots which characterized the Nigerian experience in the last two decades, but also pointed to the importance of handling inter-religious relationships in a pluralistic society like Nigeria with extreme care.

Religion itself is a highly emotive human phenomenon, and need to be very carefully handled. Religions preach peace and have served the cause of peace down through the ages, but they have also been the cause of many wars. Thus religion can be an instrument of peace or conflict depending on how it is handled. The Nigerian experience is certainly a case in point. Up to the mid-seventies Nigerians enjoyed relative religious tolerance and inter-religious peace. There

were of course inter-religious conflicts here and there, but by and large, they were contained before they turned into violent confrontations of the type we see in the late seventies and eighties. Even attempt to interpret events that led to the Nigerian civil war of the sixties in the idioms of inter-religious conflict were quickly dismissed by the majority of Nigerians, and Christians and Muslims in the rest of the country united to fight to put an end to the secessionist efforts of the South Eastern part of the country which was almost completely Christian.

In the seventies however, things changed. Factors which contributed to the attitudes of religious intolerance culminating in the string of religious disturbances from the late seventies into the eighties and early nineties, could be discussed under two themes; Religious factors and Non-religious factors.

(a) The non-religious factors could be subsumed under the terms socio-historical and ethno-political factors. The creation of more states and local governments in Nigeria, from the late sixties to the early nineties, raised hopes and inspired some moves among the ethnic minorities of Northern Nigeria to liberate themselves from the control of the Muslim leadership to which they have been subjected for centuries. Since most members of these ethnic minorities are Christian, this struggle often took on inter-religious overtones. The fact that these disturbances find expression in the burning of Churches and Mosques, and the statements of support issued by Christian Council of Nigeria (CAN) and the Supreme Council of Islam in Nigeria in support of the two conflicting parties seem to confirm this. However, these often violent conflicts such as the supposed Kaduna religious disturbance of 1987, the Bauchi riots of 1991 and the Zongo Kataf of 1992, should be recognized for what they are. They are fundamentally attempts of members of the ethnic minorities in Northern Nigeria who are still under the emirate system to liberate themselves from the quasi-colonial status to which they are still subjected thirty years after the Nigerian independence. The question is, should these ethnic minorities continue to be in the emirate system to which they were subjected through the rights of conquest in pre-colonial

times, and/or by the policies of the colonial administration? Should these ethnic minorities not be given the right of self determination? Since emirates' rule is theocratic, should the Christianized ethnic minorities continue to be under them? This is a fundamentally ethno-political problem, with admittedly some religious dimensions to it. Various governments, at the Federal and state level, have failed to address this political problem, and by so doing have allowed the continuing grievances to be expressed by outbursts of violent disturbances in some of the affected areas. Peace, even religious peace, should be based on justice. It is most difficult to convince the oppressed peoples of these ethnic minorities to accept their situation for the sake of peace in the face of the injustice which they suffer. The question of the ethnic minorities is a theme among others which the much talked about National Conference in Nigeria should address.

(b) The religious factors which contributed to the disturbances are many. There are :- (i) The differing political philosophy of the major religions in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity. (ii) The mutual suspicion and fear of domination between the two religions. (iii) Mutual ignorance of the beliefs and teachings of each others religion and sometimes even of one's own faith. (iv) Provocative acts or pronouncements which hurt the religious sensibilities of people of other faiths, whether they are intended or inadvertent.

(i) At the basis of the religious conflicts in Nigeria, is the differing political philosophy of the two major religions practised in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity. Islam in Nigeria has not accepted the principle of a secular state, which Christians assume had been bequeathed to the country by the colonial masters. In fact, the colonial administration governments, operated a sort of compromise arrangement. The emirate rule which was theocratic was allowed to continue. The Sharia courts and Sharia law with some restrictions were allowed to operate, and the strong Regional government allowed for the Muslim control of the instruments of power in the prevalently Muslim Northern Nigeria. With the creation of states however, the centre of gravity of political power shifted. At the state level, Muslim theocratic tendencies are seen in the use of government money to build mosques, Arabic and Islamic schools, and to subsidize

pilgrimages to Mecca. Christians in these states protest over this, describing it as the use of government apparatus and money to favour and promote one religion. At the Federal level this tendency found expression in the attempts to include the institution of the Federal Sharia Court of Appeal in the 1979 Constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and again during its review in 1989. Christians opposed both moves on the grounds that they breach the secularity of the Nigerian state. After very heated public debate and some meaningful dialogue, some compromise was worked out on the Sharia question, which provided for a chamber in the Federal Court of Appeal to hear appeals from the Sharia Courts of Appeal of the states. The attempt to register Nigeria as a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (O.I.C). was done stealthily by the Presidency without consultation. Violent protests by Christians led to setting up of a committee to advice government on the issue. The reports of the committee have not been published but the resentment and suspicion these attempts generated contributed to the tension and suspicions which precipitated some of the religious disturbances. These events underscore the necessity of openness and dialogue in inter-religious relationships in pluralistic societies like Nigerian.

(ii) At the basis of Christian/Muslim conflicts in Nigeria is the fear of domination and mutual suspicion. Muslims distrust Westernization, including the Western system of education and western system of government, which they see as deriving from Christian traditions, and are but veiled attempts to ensnare Muslims into abandoning Islam and embracing Christianity. They complain that many elements of the colonial heritage like accepting Sundays and Saturdays as work free days, the name and emblem Red Cross Society, and the present Nigerian education system, all have strong Christian bias, and give Christianity undue advantage. Christians on the other hand, see the Muslim persistent control of power at the Federal level and the theocratic tendencies of the Federal government, as prelude to the veiled Muslim objective to declare Nigeria an Islamic state. Thus government initiatives are often interpreted in the light of which of the two religious groups they favour. This calls for care, even handedness,

and above all dialogue in the administration of public affairs in order to allay these fears and clarify any misunderstandings.

(iii) Suspicions and misunderstanding are often a result of ignorance of each others beliefs. The Maitatsine religious riots demonstrate how devastating ignorance of one's own faith could be. Maitatsine movement claimed to be Islamic. Yet, what it had, was a distorted form of Islam. Its ignorance bred a form of religious bigotry and fanaticism which led to the massacres that spared neither Christians nor Muslims. Ignorance of other peoples faiths often breed similar bigotry. Peoples of the different faiths in Nigeria do not know one another's faiths well enough. In Nigerian today, dialogue is more needed than ever to open many doors closed by the tensions that have marked (inter-religious) relations which have resulted in two decades of religious disturbances. It is desirable to include courses on "other peoples' faith", at different levels in the educational system. This will make Nigerians know about and respect other peoples' faiths and thus lessen religious suspicions, tensions and religious disturbances.

Finally, in Nigeria which has had a history of violent religious disturbances, it is very important to avoid acts or utterances which could be provocative. Many of the disturbances discussed above, were ignited by careless but provocative actions which could have been avoided. The Kafanchan disturbances, were said to have been provoked by the testimony of a convert from Islam made over a blaring microphone which some Muslim students found offensive. However, background to the riots was also the imprudent and certainly very provocative statement credited to the former Grand Khadi of Northern Nigeria Sheik Abubakar Mohamooud Gumi, cited above. Similarly the Bauchi religious riots were said to have been provoked by derogatory remarks made by a Muslim boy about a Christian "Suya" (barbercue). The Kano riots were occasioned by the fact that government which had earlier turned down the application to invite a Muslim preacher from South Africa, subsequently granted permission to a Christian preacher from Germany. In a religiously volatile place like Nigeria, unguarded provocative actions or utterances can spell disaster. For the attainment of durable

peace, it is therefore essential to reeducate peoples attitudes and to guide public opinion in the direction of peace. Peace building is the responsibility of all. Everybody should master his or her passions and actively work for the peaceful coexistence of all in the society. Perhaps, the Kaduna religious riots of 1987 and the subsequent losses of lives and property could have been averted had the Christian and Muslim students of the College of Education Kafanchan benefitted from this education for peace and learnt to control their passions and utterances.

ENDNOTES

1. Okoye, G.N. *The 1991 Bauchi Religious Uprising - the Igbo Perspective*. Unpublished B.A. thesis, Unijos, July, 1992, p. 11.
2. Takaya, Bala, "The Foundations of Religious Intolerance In Nigeria, Backgrounds for Understanding the Maitatsine Phenomenon", *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, 2/2:1989-3/1: 1990.
3. Nwakanma, C. "Echo of a Civilian Overthrow", *This Week: Nigeria's Authoritative Newsmagazine*, vol. 4. No. 1, 30 March 1987, p. 14.
4. *The Guardian Newspaper*, Vol.8, no.5, 26 Oct. 1991. p.1.
5. Metuh-Ikenga, E. "Religion As Instrument of Peace In Nigeria", *Religion and Peace in Multi-faith Nigeria*, ed. by J. Olupona, Ife: 1992, p. 16.
6. Metuh-Ikenga, E. "Muslim Resistance to Missionary Penetration of Northern Nigeria, 1857-1960: Missiological Interpretation", *Mission Studies, Journal of the IAMS*, 111/2: 1986. p.28.
7. Crampton E.P.T.. *Christianity in Northern Nigerian*, Zaria: 1976. p. 11.
8. Metuh-Ikenga, "Moslem Resistance to Missionary Penetration...", p. 32.

9. Ibid.
10. Crampton, Op.cit. p. 85
11. Takaya, Op.cit. p. 33.
12. Okoye. G. N. **The 1991 Bauchi Religious Uprising...**, p.9.
13. Takaya, Op.cit. p. 37.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Trimingham, J.S. **Influence of Islam Upon Africa**, London: Longman, 1980, p. 34.
17. Metuh-Ikenga, E. "Religion As Instrument of Peace in Nigeria" p. 17.
18. Babarinsa, D. et Alii; "Fire of Religion", **Newswatch**, March 30, 1987, p. 20.
19. Aguwa, J.C. **Religious Dichotomy In Nigerian Politics**, Enugu, 1993, p. 18; quoting Interview with Sheikh Abubakar Mahmoud Gaumi, **Quality Magazine**, 1987.
20. **Nigerian Standard Newspaper**, No. 5331, Wed. Oct. 16. 1991. p. 1.
21. **Guardian Newspaper**, No. 5, 206, Oct. 19, 1991, p.1.

Plenary Meeting of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria Held at Enugu on September 12-16, 1994.

Communique

Preamble

The second plenary Meeting of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) for 1994 was held at the Divine Love Retreat and Conference Centre, Emene, Enugu, from September 12 to 16, 1994. The following is the communique issued at the end of the meeting.

1. The Mission of the Church in Society

It is the mission of the Church to bring the gospel message to bear, not only on individuals but also on the social, political and economic structures of nations, with the aim of promoting greater justice, integrity, love and peace among peoples. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria wishes to re-state the constant teaching of the Catholic Church, that justice is the only way to true and lasting peace. To the people of Nigeria, we are messengers of peace, and we recognize in the words of Pope Paul VI, that those who wish to have peace must work for justice. In pursuance of this mission, we have issued several statements since the onset of the current political crisis, declaring our stand on the side of justice, and the rule of law. These statements seem to have fallen on deaf ears, but not without the dire consequences on the nation and its people which we had foreseen.

2. Our Concern

The Conference observes with deep concern the prolonged distress of the Nigerian nation, and is moved by the misery and agony of the individuals and families in Nigeria, who are unable to live worthwhile lives and fulfil their obligations and

aspirations. There is widespread hunger and starvation in our country, a land so richly blessed by God but callously devastated by greedy and opportunistic Nigerians. The educational and health-care systems and resources have suffered a grievous assault as a result of the political impasse, while the indices of economic, social and political welfare have all virtually collapsed. The rich human and family values associated with our people are being swept away in the process. Some Nigerians are dying, victims of the prolonged distress. Some are thrown out on the streets to roam like lunatics, while others are living under sub-human conditions. In the face of this distress many Nigerians are trooping out to foreign countries where some of them live and work under intolerable conditions, and some even engage in drug peddling and prostitution, bringing down further the image of the country. This widespread misery and agony is not God's design but a fallout of the endless political crisis that is daily increasing in complexity.

3. Cause of the Present Crisis

The annulment of the June 12, 1993 election and the events thereafter, have continued to draw the nation further and further towards disaster. The issue of June 12 election should be urgently resolved in such a way that future elections can be conducted and their results nationally accepted. We call upon all parties responsible for the crisis to consider the misery of the people and the good of the nation, and to take such urgent steps that will bring the nation back to the course of stability, democracy and good governance. We urge all those involved in the discussion to take the path of justice, dialogue, maturity, reconciliation and the spirit of give-and-take, for the good of Nigeria.

4. Yearning for Good Democratic Government

Among the people of Nigeria, the yearning for freedom and democracy and the loss of confidence in military rule, and all those associated with it have been expressed in incessant strikes, demonstrations, and at times violent protests.

Nigerians have said it loudly and clearly, and through the events of the last few months they have demonstrated that they no longer wish to subject themselves to bad government or military rule, however benevolent. After ten years of continuous military presence in power, Nigerians are convinced now more than ever before that the military has no monopoly of political wisdom, nor is patriotism a virtue to be found only in the rank and file of the armed forces. Under military regimes, evidence abound of ethnic and religious bigotry, corruption, greed and graft. Yet these are the ills the military purportedly came to correct. Therefore any attempt to prolong military rule under any guise whatsoever is a direct violation of the people's express will.

5. Government Response

The present military government has always spoken of dialogue, but it is disheartening to note that faced with the crisis of credibility and legitimacy, it has often resorted to one panic measure after another, and besieged Nigerians with a barrage of oppressive decrees, rather than appreciate fully and respond honestly to the people's anger and anguish. The consequence is a vicious circle of widespread protests, repressive decrees, and further protests. The cumulative effect of this vicious circle is the loss of confidence in government and in public institutions, and a collapse of the moral, social and economic order in present-day Nigeria.

6. The On-going Constitutional Conference

Although this administration has set up the Constitutional Conference with the declared aim of addressing our fundamental national problems, and resolving the present political crisis, the constitution, composition and the conduct of the Conference hardly inspires the trust and confidence of the generality of Nigerians. The fact that the election of members was done in an atmosphere that was not conducive to free and fair elections, and the fact that some members of the Conference, especially, among Government appointees, have a poor track record, raise serious doubts on the integrity of

the Conference, and the eventual achievement of the aims proclaimed by this administration. Besides, the performance of the Conference so far has not changed our earlier perception, but rather confirms the fears that we expressed in our Statement of July 16, 1994. Can the future of our country be tied to the deliberation of such a Conference?

7. The People's Responsibility

We observe with dismay that the people themselves are responsible in some measure for the distress of the moment. For while many God-fearing Nigerians continue to work tirelessly towards the building of a just and peaceful nation, others persist in plundering our resources and even exploiting the on-going crisis for their selfish gains. Many Nigerians carry on a life of injustice and corruption, and others aid and abet bribery, cheating, hoarding of scarce commodities, and the arbitrary raising of prices. These evil practices further worsen the plight of the poor. As the Lord says through prophet Hosea: "There is no faithfulness or love in the land, and the people do not acknowledge me as God... Crimes increase, and there is one murder after another. And so, the land will dry up..." (Hosea 4:1-3).

8. Nigerians, Continue The Struggle

We salute our country men and women who, in the face of this dire situation, have been promoting and defending human rights and freedom. Some of them have been subjected to untold hardship, including indefinite detention without trial. May their suffering not be in vain. Nigeria is a nation of free people. We want to remind our beloved country men and women that we are a free people. We may be vulnerable but not helpless under the present circumstances. We must not allow anyone to reduce us to slaves through repressive decrees. We must continue to resist the violation of our fundamental human rights, including the right to free expression, and the right to choose our own leaders. We must continue to resist dictatorship by all peaceful but effective means.

9. The Way Forward

On the way out of the present impasse, we believe that Nigerians are resourceful enough to work out alternative arrangements, including some of those which have been at one time or the other suggested to recent military administrations, but to which they turned deaf ears. As the first step to dialogue, reconciliation and peace, we call for the immediate and unconditional release of all political detainees and the repeal of all oppressive, repressive and retroactive decrees. We call for the immediate opening of all closed Media Houses, and for the entrenchment of the rule of law. The government itself must respect the rule of law. Above all we call for a change of heart on the part of all Nigerians, if we are ever to have peace and prosperity, since righteousness exalts a nation (Proverbs 14:34). Indeed, a nation without integrity has no right to peace.

10. Our Hope

As Christian leaders, we are, however, apostles and ministers of hope. We urge the people of Nigeria, especially the youth, the poor and the lowly who have had to bear the greater burden of the protracted political crisis not to despair. We must persevere in hope. The God we serve is a compassionate, loving and saving Lord. Our help is in Him, the eternal Shepherd, who made heaven and earth (Psalms 23, 124). The Lord has promised to be with us in times of trouble and to answer us when we call upon Him (Psalm 91:15). We believe that He will soon see us out of the dark tunnel.

11. A Call to Prayer and Action

We call for sustained prayers and intercessions on the part of the faithful, to the One who alone can save Nigeria. We direct that the recitation of the PRAYER FOR NIGERIA IN DISTRESS be continued. With intense prayer and fasting, we, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria reconsecrate our country to Our Lady Queen of Nigeria. We direct that this reconsecration be also done in the month of October, by individuals and

families, culminating with the reconsecration of each parish and diocese on Sunday, October 30, 1994. We also direct that at different levels, the prayers of the people be accompanied by serious reflection with a view to identifying the demands of the Gospel on all of us in the present circumstances. We must all seek divine guidance to know what we must to do, and the grace and courage to act effectively in the promotion of justice and peace in our land.

Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology 2 (1, 1989).

Vol. 2 No. 1 April 1989

ISSN 0794 — 8670

CONTENTS

Foreword	The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians (EANT).....4
Dr. C.U. Manus	New Testament Theological Foundations for Christian Contribution to Politics in Nigeria.....7
Fr. E.E. Uzuoku	Church-State Relations in the Early Church and the Crisis facing the Christian Church in Nigeria.....31
Dr. C.I. Ejizu	Ethics of Politics in Nigeria: the Christian perspective.....46
Rev. Canon S.I. Omoera	A Theology of Nigerian Politics.....59
Bishop J. Onaiyekan	State Secularity and the Nigerian Christian.....75
Dr. A.O. Erhueh	The Contribution of Christianity to Politics in Nigeria. A Historico-Theological overview.....84

CONTENTS

Editorial: 4
Dr. Bala J. Takaya	The Kaduna Mafia and the Church in Nigeria.....6
Bishop J. Onaiyekan	Strategies for Islamic Expansion in Nigeria — A Christian Response: Notes and Reflections.....16
Dr. Bala J. Takaya	The foundations of Religious Intolerance in Nigeria: Backgrounds for understanding the Maitatsine phenomenon....31
Ibrahim Musa Ahmadu	Peace and Stability in Nigeria. The Role of the Church.....44
Rev. Dr. Obiora Ike	Church and Contemporary Nigerian Society (Social Teachings of the Church: Past and Present — Enunciation of Relevant Theological Principles).....61
Rev. Dr. Anthony O. Erhueh	The Dignity of the Human Person in Contemporary Nigerian Society.....72
Rev. Dr. Simon O. Anyanwu	Response to the Book: "The Kaduna Mafia" from the Viewpoint of Political Theology.....83
Rev. Dr. Breifne Walker c.s.s.p	Bonhoeffer and Christian Social Ethics: — Private Virtue or Responsible Action?.....92

CONTENTS

Foreword	Human Rights — The African Perspective	3
O.C. Eze	Nigeria and Human Rights — Prospects and Problems	5
L. Hurbon	The Slave Trade and Black Slavery in America	19
C.I. Ejizu	Human Rights in African Indigenous Religion	31
I.M. Ahmadu	The Rights of Christians in Islamic States of Nigeria	46
B. Muoneke	Women Discipleship and Evangelization (Luke 8:1-3)	59
O.U. Kalu	The Protestants' Protest for Human Rights	70
M. Nkinda	The Particular Juridical Order of African Churches: Application of the Principle of Subsidiarity and Decentraliza- tion	89
E.E. Uzukwu	Human Rightst in Africa — Contextual Theological Reflection	99
I.R.A. Ozigboh	The Definitive Rehabilitation of Bishop Shanahan: A Review Article	121
Book Review	a. N.I. Omenka: <i>The School in the Service of Evangeliza- tion: The Catholic Educational Impact in Eastern Nigeria 1886 - 1950. Leiden: Brill, 1989, 317 pages.</i> Reviewer: Peter Ik. Okonkwo, CMF.	140
	b. J.I. Ibegbu: <i>Nationalisation of Schools in Nigeria, Rome: N. Domenici — Peuceux, 1991; 124 pages.</i> Reviewer: Francis Njoku, CMF.	143
	c. D. Regan: <i>Church for Liberation — A pastoral portrait of the Church in Brazil. Dublin: (Dominican Publica- tions): 1987, 238 pages.</i> Reviewer: Jojo Obu-Mends, C.S.Sp.	146
	d. B. Frost: <i>The Politics of Peace. London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1991. 225 pages £10.95.</i> Revicwer: Breifne Walker, C.S.Sp.	149
	e. P. Vallye: <i>Bad Samaritans: First World Ethics and Third World Debt. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1990, ix +374 pages.</i> Reviewer: E.E. Uzukwu, C.S.Sp.	152

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial.....	1
J.M. Waliggo The Role of Culture and Religion in Authentic Development of Africa.....	3
U. Simson Should We Develop? And In What Direction?..	23
Obiora Ike Development in Africa: Cultural, Ethical Religious Considerations.....	32
J. Mihevc The Theology of Structural Adjustment ...	44
B. Ikegwuonu Self-Reliance of Spiritan Young Provinces and Foundations in Developing Countries ...	61
M. H. Kukah The Price of Faith: Money in the Economy of Salvation.....	72
Book Review 1. Alfred T. Hennelly, ed., Liberation Theology. A Documentary History. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1990, xxvi+547 pages. Reviewer:Editor.....	83
2. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio- Economic Recovery and Transformation. A Popular Version. Addis Ababa: UNECA, 1991. Reviewer:Editor.....	84

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial.....	1
Nicoué K. Broohm Political Power, Multiethnic Territories and Democratic Renewal in Africa	6
B. Abanuka African Traditional Communities and Multiethnic States	16
J. Okoro Ijoma Nigeria's Path to Western Democracy 1900-1960: A Historical Perspective ..	30
C. U. Ilegbune The Legitimation of Government in Africa	46

Reviews and Review Articles.

1. For Sovereign National Conferences in Post-Colonial Africa. A Review Article of F. Eboussi Boulaga's <i>Les Conférences Nationales en Afrique noire. Une Affaire à Suivre</i> . Paris: Karthala, 1993.	
Reviewer: Elochukwu E. Uzukwu.....	64
2. Olusegun Obasanjo and Akin Mobogunje (Editors), Elements of Democracy. Abeokuta, Nigeria: ALF Publications, 1992, xi+212 pages.	
Reviewer: Iwuchukwu Oliver	71

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial.....	1
Elochukwu Uzukwu A Servant Church in a New African Nation: Leadership as a Service of Listening	4
Cora Twohig-Moengangongo Paradigms of Power	33
Meinrad P. Hebga Universality in Theology and Inculturation	52
Emefie I.-Metuh Two Decades of Religious Conflict in Nigeria: A Recipe for Peace	69
Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria Communique.....	94